

hazardous times, as attended the first profession of it. It required men to risk all the blessings and comforts of this life, and to face and endure all the evils of it, without any future prospects. And is this a character of his religion, fit for a Christian to endure? and must he not fix this character on it, if he gives up his future hopes, and denies the resurrection of the dead? This argument the apostle brings home to himself. *I protest*, says he, *by your rejoicings in Christ Jesus*, i. e. by all the comforts of Christianity, all the peculiar succours and comforts of our holy faith, that *I die daily*, ver. 31. He was in continual danger of his death, and carried his life, as we say, *in his hand*. And why should he thus expose himself, if he had no hopes after life? To live in daily view and expectation of death, and yet have no prospect beyond it, must be very heartless and uncomfortable, and his case upon this account a very melancholy one. He had need be very well assured of the resurrection of the dead, or he was guilty of extreme weakness, in hazarding all that was dear to him in this world, and his life into the bargain. He had encountered very great difficulties and fierce enemies, he had fought with beasts at Ephesus, ver. 32. and was in danger of being pulled to pieces by an enraged multitude, stirred up by Demetrius and the other craftsmen, Acts xix. 28. Though some understand this literally of Paul's being exposed to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheatre at a Roman show in that city. And Nicephorus tells a formal story to this purpose, and of the miraculous compliance of the lions to him when they came near him. But so remarkable a trial and circumstance of his life, methinks, should not have been passed over by Luke, and much less by himself when he gives us so large and particular a detail of his sufferings, 2 Cor. xi. 25, to the end. When he mentions, that he was *five times scourged of the Jews, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked*, it is strange he should not have said he was once exposed to fight with the beasts. I take it therefore, that this fighting with beasts is a figurative expression; the beasts intended were men of a fierce and furious disposition; and that this refers to the passage above-cited. Now, saith he, what advantage have I from such contests, *if the dead rise not*? Why should I die daily, expose myself daily to the danger of dying by violent hands, if the dead rise not? And if *post mortem nihil*, if I am to perish by death, and expect nothing after it? Could any thing be more weak? and was Paul so senseless? Had he given the Corinthians any ground to entertain such a thought of him? If he had not been well assured death would have been to his advantage, would he in this stupid manner have thrown away his life? Could any thing, but the sure hopes of a better life after death, have extinguished the love of life in him to this degree? What *advantageth it me*, if the dead rise not? What can I propose to myself? Note, It is very lawful and fit for a Christian to propose advantage to himself by his fidelity to God. Thus did Paul. Thus did our blessed Lord himself, Heb. xii. 2. And thus we are bid to do after his example, and *have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life*. This is the very end of our faith, viz. the *salvation of our souls*, 1 Pet. i. 9. Not only what it will issue in, but what we should aim at. (2.) It would be a much wiser thing to take the comforts of this life; *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*, ver. 32. turn epicures. Thus this sentence means in the prophet, Isa. xxii. 13. Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them. This would be a wiser course if there be no resurrection, no after life or state, than to abandon all the pleasures of life, and offer and expose ourselves to all the miseries of life, and live in continual peril of perishing by savage rage and cruelty. This passage also plainly implies, as I have hinted above, that those who denied the resurrection among the Corinthians were perfect Sadducees; of whose principles we have this account in the holy writings, that they say *there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit*, Acts xxiii. 8. that is, that the man is all body, that there is nothing in him to survive the body, nor will that, when once he is dead, ever revive again. Such Sadducees were the men against whom the apostle argues here. Otherwise his arguments had no force in them. For though the body should never revive, yet as long as the mind survived it, he might have much advantage for all the hazards he run for Christ's sake. Nay, it is certain that the mind is to be the principal seat and subject of the heavenly glory and happiness. But if there be no hopes after death, would not every wise man prefer an easy comfortable life before such a wretched one as the apostle led? nay, and endeavour to enjoy the comforts of life as fast as possible, because the continuance of it is short: Note, Nothing but the hopes of better things hereafter can enable a man to forego all the comforts and pleasures here, and embrace poverty, contempt, misery, and death. Thus did the apostles and primitive Christians; but how wretched was their case, and how foolish their conduct, if they deceived themselves, and abused the world with vain and false hopes?

(5.) The apostle closes his argument with a caution, exhortation, and reproof. (1.) A caution against the dangerous conversation of ill men, men of loose lives and principles. *Be not deceived*, says he, *evil communications corrupt good manners*, ver. 33. Possibly some of those who said there was no resurrection of the dead, were men of loose lives, and endeavoured to countenance their vicious practices by so corrupt a principle: and had that speech often in their mouths, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. Now, the apostle grants that the talk was to the purpose, if there were no future state. But having confuted their principle, he now warns the Corinthians how dangerous such men's conversation must prove. He tells them they would likely be corrupted by them, and fall in with their course of life, if they gave into their evil principles. Note, Bad company, and conversation, are likely to make bad men. Those who would keep their innocence must keep good company. Error and vice are infectious; and if we would avoid the contagion, we must keep clear of those who have taken it. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*, Prov. xiii. 20. (2.) Here is an exhortation to break off their sins and rouse themselves, and lead a more holy and religious life, ver. 34. *Awake to righteousness*, or awake righteously, *inwardly and sin not, or sin no more*. Rouse yourselves, break off your sins by repentance; renounce and forsake every evil way, correct whatever is amiss, and do not by sloth and stupidity be led away into such conversation and principles as will sap your Christian hopes, and corrupt your practice. The disbelief of a future state destroys all virtue and piety. But the best improvement to be made of the truth is to cease from sin, and set ourselves to the business of religion, and that in good earnest. If there will be a resurrection and a future life, we should live and act as those that believe it; and should not give into such senseless and sottish notions, as will debauch our morals, and render us loose and sensual in our lives. (3.) Here is a reproof, and a sharp one, to some at least among them. *Some of you have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame*. Note, It is a shame in Christians not to have the knowledge of God. Christian religion gives the best information that can be had about God, his nature, and grace, and government. They who profess this religion, reproach themselves by remaining without the knowledge of God. For it must be owing to their own sloth and slight of God, that they are ignorant of him. And is it not an horrid shame for a Christian to slight God, and be so wretchedly ignorant in matters that so nearly and highly concern him? Note also, That it must be ignorance of God, that leads men into the disbelief of a resurrection and a future life. Those that know God, know that he will not abandon his faithful servants, and

leavethem exposed to such hardships and sufferings, without any recompence of reward. They would know he is not unfaithful, nor unkind, to forget their labour and patience, their faithful services and cheerful sufferings, nor let their labour be in vain. But I am apt to think the expression has a much stronger meaning; that there were atheistical people amongst them, that hardly owned a God, or one that had any concern with, or took any cognizance of human affairs. These were a scandal and shame to any Christian church indeed. Note, Real atheism lies at the bottom of men's disbelief of a future state. They who own a God and a providence, and observe how unequal the distributions of the present life are, and how frequently the best men fare worst, can hardly doubt an after-state where every thing will be set to rights.

35. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? 36. Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. 37. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. 38. But God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. 39. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. 40. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. 42. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; 43. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: 44. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. 48. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 49. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50. Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

The apostle comes now to answer a plausible and principal objection against the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Concerning which observe, (1.) The proposal of the objection. *Some man will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?* ver. 35. The objection is plainly twofold. (1.) How are they raised up, that is, by what means? How should they be raised, what power is equal to this effect? It was an opinion that prevailed much among the heathens, and the Sadducees seem to have been in the same sentiment, that it was not within the compass of divine power, *mortales a ternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos*: to make mortal men, immortal, or revive and restore the dead. Such sort of men they seem to have been, who among the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead, and object here, *How are they raised?* How should they be raised? Is it not utterly impossible? The second part of the objection is about the quality of their bodies who shall rise. *With what body will they come?* Will it be with the same body? With like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities, or various? The former objection is, that of those who opposed the doctrine; the latter, the inquiry of curious doubters. To the (1.) The apostle answers, by telling him this was to be brought about by divine power, that every power which they had all observed to do somewhat very like it, year after year in the death and revival of the corn: and therefore it was an argument of great weakness and stupidity, to doubt whether the resurrection of the dead might not be effected by the same power. *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die*, ver. 36. It must first corrupt before it will quicken and spring up. It not only sprouts after it is dead, but it must die that it may live. And why should any be so foolish as to imagine, that the man once dead cannot be made to live again, by the same power which every year brings the dead grain to life? This is the substance of what he answers to the first question. Note, It is a foolish thing to question the divine power to raise the dead, when we see him every day quickening and reviving things that are dead. But he is longer in answering to the second inquiry.

He begins, (1.) By observing that there is a change made in the grain that is sown. It is not that body which shall be that is sown, but bare grain of wheat or barley, &c. but God gives it such a body as he will, and in such way as he will, only so as to distinguish every kind from each other. Every seed sown has its proper body, is constituted of such materials, and figured in such a manner as is proper for it, proper to that kind. This is plainly in the divine power, though we no more know how it is done, than we know how a dead man is raised to life again. It is certain the grain undergoes a great change; and it is intimated in this passage, that so will the dead when they rise again, and live again in their bodies after death.

(2.) He proceeds hence to observe, that there is a great deal of variety among other bodies as there is among plants; as, (1.) In bodies of flesh, *All flesh is not the same*. That of men is of one kind, that of beasts another, that of fishes another, and that of birds another, ver. 39. There is a variety in all the kinds, and somewhat peculiar in every kind to distinguish it from the other. (2.) In bodies celestial and terrestrial, there is also a difference. And what is for the glory of one, is not for the other. For the true glory of every being consists in its fitness for its rank and state. Earthly bodies are not adapted to the heavenly regions, nor heavenly bodies fitted to the condition of earthly beings, Nay, (3.) There is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies themselves. *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory*

glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory, ver. 41. All this is to intimate to us, that the bodies of the dead when they rise will be so far changed, that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions, and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead when they shall be raised, as there is among the sun, and moon and stars, nay among the stars themselves. And all this carries an intimation along with it, that it must be as easy to divine power to raise the dead, and recover their mouldered bodies, as out of the same materials to form so many different kinds of flesh and plants, and for aught we know, celestial bodies as well as terrestrial ones. The sun and stars may, for aught we know, be composed of the same materials as the earth we tread on, though so much refined and changed by the divine skill and power. And can he out of the same materials form such various beings, and yet not be able to raise the dead? Having thus prepared the way, he comes,

(3.) To speak directly to the point. So also, saith he, is the resurrection of the dead. So, so as the plant growing out of the putrefied grain, so we no longer to be a terrestrial but a celestial body, and varying in glory from the other dead, who are raised as one star doth from another. But he instances in some particulars, as (1.) *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.* It is sown: Burying the dead is like sowing them, it is like committing the seed to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. And our bodies that are sown are corruptible, liable to putrefy and moulder, and crumble to dust; but when we rise they will be out of the power of the grave, and never more liable to corruption. (2.) *It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.* Our's is at present a vile body, Phil. iii. 21. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body, it is thrown into the grave, as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure. But at the resurrection a glory will be put upon it. It will be made like the glorious body of our Saviour. It will be purged from all the dregs of earth, and refined into an aetherial substance, and shine out with a splendour resembling his. (3.) *It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.* It is laid in the earth a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death, deprived of all vital capacities and powers of life and strength; it is utterly unable to move or stir. But when we rise, our bodies will have heavenly life and vigour infused into them. They shall be hale, and firm, and durable, and lively, and liable no more to any infirmity, weakness or decay. (4.) *It is sown a natural, or animal body, it is raised a spiritual body.* A body fitted to the low condition, and sensitive pleasures and enjoyments of this life, which are all gross in comparison of the heavenly state and enjoyments. But when we rise, it will be quite otherwise. Our body will rise spiritual. Not that body will be changed into spirit, this would be a contradiction in our common conceptions. It would be as much as to say, body changed into what is not body, matter made immaterial. The expression is to be understood comparatively. We shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined to the last degree, made light and agile; and though they are not changed into spirit, yet made fit to be perpetual associates of spirits made perfect. And why should it not be as much in the power of God to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then out of the same stuff produce such variety of beings both in earth and heaven? To God all things are possible. And this cannot be impossible.

(4.) He illustrates this by a comparison of the first and second Adam. There is an animal body, saith he, and there is a spiritual body; and then goes into the comparison in several instances. (1.) As we have our natural body, the animal body we have in this world, from the first Adam, we expect our spiritual body from the second. This is implied in the whole comparison. (2.) And this is but consonant to the different characters these two persons bear. The first Adam was made a living soul, such a being as ourselves, and with a power of propagating such beings as himself, and conveying to them a nature and animal body like his own, but none other nor better. The second Adam is a quickening spirit, he is the resurrection and the life, John xi. 25. He hath life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will, John v. 20, 21. The first man was of the earth, made out of the earth, and was earthy; his body was fitted to the region of his abode: but the second Adam is the Lord from heaven, he who come down from heaven, and giveth life to the world, John vi. 33. He who came down from heaven, and was in heaven at the same time, John iii. 13. The Lord of heaven and earth. If the first Adam could communicate to us natural and animal bodies, cannot the second Adam make our bodies spiritual ones? If the deputed lord of this lower creation could do the one, cannot the Lord from heaven, the Lord of heaven and earth do the other? (3.) We must first have natural bodies from the first Adam, before we can have spiritual bodies from the second, ver. 46. We must bear the image of the earthy, before we can bear the image of the heavenly. Such is the established order of providence. We must have weak, frail, mortal bodies, by descent from the first Adam, before we can have lively, spiritual, and immortal ones, by the quickening power of the second. We must die before we can live to die no more. (4.) Yet if we are Christ's true believers in him, (for this whole discourse relates to the resurrection of the saints) it is as certain that we shall have spiritual bodies, as it is now that we have natural or animal ones. By these we are as the first Adam earthy, we bear his image; by those we shall be as the second Adam, have bodies like his own, heavenly, and so bear his image. And we are as certainly intended to bear the one, as we have borne the other. As sure therefore as we have had natural bodies, we shall have spiritual ones. The dead in Christ shall not only rise, but shall rise thus gloriously changed.

(5.) He sums up this argument, by assigning the reason of this change, ver. 50. Now this I say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor doth corruption inherit incorruption. The natural body is flesh and blood, consisting of bones, muscles, nerves, veins, arteries, and their several fluids; and as such it is of a corruptible frame and form, liable to dissolution, to rot and moulder. But no such thing shall inherit the heavenly regions: for this were for corruption to inherit incorruption, which is little better than a contradiction in terms. The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, and never fadeth away, 1 Pet. i. 4. How can this be possessed by flesh and blood, which is corruptible, and will fade away? It must be changed into everenduring substance, before it can be capable of possessing the heavenly inheritance. The sum is, that the bodies of the saints, when they shall rise again, will be greatly changed from what they are now, and much for the better. They are now corruptible flesh and blood, they will be then incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual bodies, fitted to the celestial world and state, where they are ever afterwards to dwell and have their eternal inheritance.

51. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. 52. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.) 53. For this cor-

ruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54. So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56. The sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. 57. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

To confirm what he had said of this change, he here, (1.) Tells them what had been concealed from them, or unknown to them till then! that all the saints should not die, but all would be changed. They that are alive at our Lord's coming, will be caught up into the clouds without dying, 1 Thess. iv. 17. But it is plain from this passage, that it will not be without changing from corruption to incorruption. The frame of their living bodies shall be thus altered, as well as those that are dead. And this in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, ver. 52. What cannot almighty power effect? That power that calls the dead into life, can surely thus soon and suddenly change the living; for changed they must be as well as the dead, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This is the mystery which the apostle shews to the Corinthians: Behold, I shew you a mystery, or bring into open light a truth dark and unknown before. Note, There are many mysteries shewn to us in the gospel. Many truths that before were utterly unknown, are there made known; many truths that were but dark and obscure before, are there brought into open day, and plainly revealed. And many things are in part revealed that will never be fully known, nor perhaps clearly understood. The apostle here makes known a truth unknown before, viz. that the saints living at our Lord's second coming, would not die, but be changed; that this change would be made in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and at the sound of the last trump. For, as he tells us elsewhere, the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and the trump of God, 1 Thess. iv. 16. so here, the trumpet must sound. It is the loud summons of all the living and all the dead, to come and appear at the tribunal of Christ. At this summons the graves shall open, the dead saints shall rise incorruptible, and the living saints shall be changed into the same incorruptible state, ver. 52.

(2.) He assigns the reason of this change, ver. 53. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. How otherwise could the man be a fit inhabitant of the incorruptible regions; or be fitted to possess the eternal inheritance? How can that which is corruptible and mortal, enjoy what is incorruptible, permanent, and immortal? This corruptible body must be made incorruptible, this mortal body must be changed into immortal, that the man may be capable of enjoying the happiness designed for him. Note, It is this corruptible must put on incorruption, the demolished fabric that must be reared again. What is sown must be quickened. Saints will come in their own bodies, ver. 38. not in other bodies.

(3.) He let us know what will follow upon this change of the living and dead in Christ, Then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory, or he will swallow up death in victory, 1 Cor. xv. 54. For mortality shall be then swallowed up of life, 2 Cor. v. 4. And death perfectly subdued and conquered, and saints for ever delivered from its power. Such a conquest shall be obtained over it, that it shall for ever disappear in those regions, to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. And therefore will the saints hereupon sing their triumph, their song of triumph. That when this mortal shall have put on immortality, will death be swallowed up, for ever swallowed up, as now. Christ hinders it from swallowing his saints when they die: but when they rise again, death shall, as to them, be swallowed up for ever. And upon this destruction of death will they break out into a song of triumph.

(1.) They will glory over death as a vanquished enemy, and insult this great and terrible destroyer. O death where is thy sting? "Where is now thy sting, thy power to hurt? What mischief hast thou done us? We were dead, but behold we live again, and shall die no more. Thou art vanquished and disarmed, and we are out of the reach of thy deadly dart. Where now is thy fatal artillery, thy stores of death? We fear no farther mischief from thee, nor heed thy weapons, but defy thy power, and despise thy wrath." And, O grave where is thy victory? "Where now is thy victory? What is become of it? Where are the spoils and trophies of it? Once we were thy prisoners, but the prison-doors are burst open, the locks and bolts have been forced to give way, and our shackles are knocked off, and we are for ever released. Captivity is taken captive. The imaginary victor is conquered, and forced to resign his conquests, and release his captives. Thy triumphs grave are at an end. The bands of death are loosed, and we at liberty, and are never more to be hurt by death, or imprisoned in the grave." In a moment the power of death, and the conquests and spoils of the grave are gone. And, as to the saints, the very signs of them will not remain. Where are they? Thus will they raise themselves, when they become immortal; and to the honour of their Saviour, and the praise of divine grace, glory over vanquished death.

(2.) The foundation for this triumph is here intimated. (1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt. The sting of death is sin, that gives venom to his dart, that only puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. And sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the strength of sin is the law. It is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, Rom. v. 12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring. (2.) In the account given of the victory saints obtain over it through Jesus Christ, ver. 57. The sting of death is sin, but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting, he has made atonement for sin, he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. The strength of sin is the law, but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's becoming a curse for us. So that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, through Christ, z. e. by his incarnation, suffering, and death. Death may seize the believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in its power. There is a day coming, when the grave shall be open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then it will plainly appear, that as to them death will have lost its strength and sting: and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their room. By dying he conquered death, and spoiled the grave. And through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They rejoice beforehand many times in the hope of this victory; and when they rise glorious from the grave, will boldly triumph over death. Note, It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ, that sin is pardoned and death disarmed. The Lord puts arms into the hand of death to destroy the sinner,

sinner, but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting. It is by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we are freely justified, Rom. iii. 24. It is no wonder therefore, (3.) If this triumph of the saints over death should issue in thanksgiving to God. *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord*, ver. 57. The way to sanctify all our joy, is to make it tributary to the praise of God. Then only we do enjoy our blessings and honours in an holy manner, when God has his revenue of glory out of it and we are free to pay it to him. And this really improves and exalts our satisfaction. We are conscious at once of having done our duty, and enjoyed our pleasure. And what can be more joyous in itself, than the saint's triumph over death when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When he shews such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him? Psalm lxxxviii. 10. Those who remain under the power of death, can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of saints to thankfulness and praise: Praise for the victory. It is great and glorious in itself, and for the means whereby it is obtained; it is given of God through Christ Jesus. A victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Note, How many springs of joy to the saints, and thanksgivings to God, are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests, of our Redeemer! With what acclamations will saints, rising from the dead, applaud him! How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever! *Thanks be to God*, will be the burden of their song, and angels will join in the chorus, and declare their consent a loud *Amen, Hallelujah!*

58. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

In this verse we have the improvement of the whole argument, in an exhortation, enforced by a motive resulting plainly from it. (1.) An exhortation, and this three-fold. (1.) That they should be steadfast, *ἵστατοι*, firm, fixed in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which he had preached, and they had received, viz. That Christ died for our sins, and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures, ver. 3, 4. And the faith of the glorious resurrection of the sanctified dead, which, as he had shewn, had so near and necessary a connection with the former. Do not let your belief of these truths be shaken or staggered. They are most certain, and of the last importance. Note, Christians should be steadfast believers of this great article of the resurrection of the dead. It is evidently founded on the death of Christ. *Because he lives, his servants shall live also*, John xiv. 19. And it is of the last importance. A disbelief of a future life, will open a way to all manner of licentiousness, and corrupt men's morals to the last degree. It will be easy and natural from hence to infer that we may live like beasts, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. (2.) He exhorts them to be *unmoveable*; viz. in their hope and expectation of this great privilege, of being raised incorruptible and immortal. Christians should not be moved away from this hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. this glorious and blessed hope. They should not renounce nor resign their comfortable expectations, they are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their rich Saviour, and the promise of God, to whom it is impossible to lie. Hopes that shall be their most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in Christian duty. Should they part with these hopes? Should they suffer them to be shaken? Note, Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. *This hope should be an anchor to their souls, firm and sure*, Heb. vi. 19. (3.) He exhorts them to *abound in the work of the Lord*, and that always, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. They should be diligent and persevering herein, and going ever on towards perfection. They should be continually making advances in true piety, and ready and apt for every good work. The most cheerful duty, the greatest diligence, the most constant perseverance, is what becomes those who have such glorious hopes. Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are secured of such abundant recompence in a future life? What vigour and resolution, what constancy and patience should these hopes inspire! Note, Christians should not stint themselves, as to their growth in holiness, but be always improving in sound religion, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

(2.) The motive resulting from the former discourse is, that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; nay, they know it shall not. They have the best grounds in the world to build upon. They have all the assurance that can rationally be expected. As sure as Christ is risen they shall rise. And Christ is as surely risen, as the scriptures are true and the word of God. The apostles saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers, and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? Note, True Christians have undoubted evidence that their labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Not their most diligent services, nor their most painful sufferings. They will not be in vain, not be vain and unprofitable. Note, Christians labour will not be lost labour. They may lose for God, but they shall lose nothing by it. Nay, there is more implied than is expressed in this phrase. It means, that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their labour of love, Heb. vi. 10. Nay, he will do exceeding abundantly above what they can now ask or think. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them, Rom. viii. 18. Note, They that serve God have good wages. They cannot do too much, nor suffer too much for so good a master. If they serve him now they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall arise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life.

C H A P. XVI.

In this chapter the apostle, (1.) Gives directions about some charitable collection to be made in this church, for the afflicted and impoverished churches in Judea, ver. 1—5. (2.) He talks of making them a visit, ver. 6—10. (3.) He recommends Timothy to them, and tells them Apollos intended to come to them, ver. 11—13. (4.) He presses them to watchfulness, constancy, charity, and to pay a due regard to all who helped him, and his

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fellow-labourers in their work, ver. 14—19. (5.) After salutations from others, and his own, he closes the epistle with a solemn admonition to them, and his good wishes for them, ver. 20, to the end.

1. NOW concerning the collection for the fruits, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

In this chapter Paul closes his long epistle with some particular matters of less moment. But as all was written by divine inspiration, it is profitable for our instruction. He begins with directing them about a charitable collection on a particular occasion, viz. the distresses and poverty of the Christians in Judea, that at this time were extraordinary; partly through the general calamities of that nation, and partly through the particular suffering to which they were exposed. Now concerning this, observe,

(1.) How he introduces his direction. It was not a peculiar service which he required of them. He had given the like orders to the churches of Galatia, ver. 1. He desired them to conform themselves only to the same rules which he had given to other churches on the like occasion. *He did not desire that others should be eased, and they burdened*, 2 Cor. viii. 13. He also prudently mentions these orders of his to the churches of Galatia, to excite emulation, and stir them up to be liberal according to their circumstances and the occasion. They who exceeded most churches in spiritual gifts, and as it is probable in worldly wealth, (see the argument) sure would not suffer themselves to come behind any in their bounty to their afflicted brethren. Note, The good examples of other Christians and churches, should stir in us an holy emulation. It is becoming a Christian not to hear to be out-done by a fellow Christian in any thing virtuous and praise-worthy, provided this consideration only makes him exert himself, not envy others. And the more advantages we have above others, the more should we endeavour to exceed them. The church of Corinth should not be out-done in this service of love by the churches of Galatia, who do not appear to have been enriched with equal spiritual gift or outward ability.

(2.) The direction itself. Concerning which, observe,

(1.) The manner in which the collection was to be made. *Every one was to lay by in store*, ver. 2. have a treasury or fund with himself for this purpose. The meaning is, that he should lay by as he could spare from time to time, and by that means make up a sum for this charitable purpose. Note, It is a good thing to lay up a store for good uses: They who are rich in this world, should be rich in good works, 1. Tim. vi. 17, 18. The best way to be so is to appropriate of their income, and have a treasury for this purpose, a stock for the poor as well as themselves. By this means they will be ready to every good work, as the opportunity offers. And many who labour with their own hands for a livelihood should so work, that they may have to give to them that needeth, Eph. iv. 28. Indeed their treasury for good works can never be very large (though according to circumstances it may considerably vary), but the best way in the world for them to get a treasury for this purpose, is to lay by from time to time, as they can afford. Some of the Greek fathers rightly observe here, that this advice was given for the sake of the poorer among them. They were to lay by from week to week, and not bring into the common treasury, that by this means their contributions might be easy to themselves, and yet grow into a sum for the relief of their brethren. *Every little*, as the proverb says, *would make a mickle*. Indeed all our charity and benevolence should be free and cheerful, and for that reason should be made as easy to ourselves as may be. And what more likely way to make us easy in this matter, than thus to lay by? We may cheerfully give when we know we can spare, and that we have been laying by in store that we may.

(2.) Here is the measure in which they are to lay by, *as God hath prospered them*; *κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν*, as he hath been prospered, viz. by divine providence; as God has been pleased to bless and succeed his labours and business. Note, All our business and labour is that to which God is pleased to make it. It is not the diligent hand that will make rich by itself, without the divine blessing, Prov. x. 4, 32. compared. Our prosperity and success is from God, and not from ourselves. And he is to be owned in all, and honoured with all. It is his bounty and blessing to which we owe all we have; and whatever we have is to be used and be employed, and improved for him. His right in ourselves, and all that is ours, is to be owned and yielded to him. And what argument more proper to excite us to charity to the people and children of God, than to consider all we have as his gift, as coming from him. Note, When God blesses and prospers us, we should be ready to relieve and comfort his needy servants. When his bounty flows forth upon us, we should not confine it to ourselves, but let it stream out on others. The good we receive from him, should stir us up to do good to others, to resemble him in our beneficence. And therefore the more good we receive from God, the more we should do good to others. They were to lay by as God hath blessed them; in that proportion. The more they had through God's blessing gained by their business or labour, their traffic or work, the more they were to lay by. Note, God expects that our beneficence to others, should hold some proportion to his bounty to us. All we have is from God; the more he gives (circumstances being considered) the more he enables us to give, and the more he expects we should give; that we should give more than others that are less able; that we should give more than ourselves when we were less able. And on the other hand, from him to whom God gives less, he expects less. He is no tyrant or cruel task-master to exact brick without straw, or expect men shall do more good than he gives ability. No, where there is a willing mind, he accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, 2 Cor. viii. 12. But as he prospers and blesses us, and puts us into a capacity to do good, he expects we should. The greater ability he gives, the more enlarged should our hearts be, and the more open our hands; but where the ability is less, the hands cannot be as open, however willing the mind may be, and large the heart. Nor doth God expect it.

(3.) Here is the time when this is to be done. *The first day of the week*, *κατὰ μίαν σάββατον*, Luke xxiv. 1. the Lord's day, the Christian holiday: when public assemblies were held, and public worship was celebrated, and the Christian institutions and mysteries (as the ancients called them) were attended upon; then let every one lay by him. It is a day of holy rest; and the more vacation the mind has from worldly cares and toils, the more disposition hath it to shew mercy. And the other duties of the day should stir up to the performance of this. Works of charity should always accompany works of piety. True piety towards God will beget kind and

friendly disposition towards men. *This command have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his master also,* 1 John iv. 24. Works of mercy are the genuine fruits of true love to God, and therefore are a proper service on his own day. Note, God's day is a proper season on which to lay up for charitable uses, or lay out in them, according as he hath prospered us. It is paying tribute for the blessings of the past week, and it is a proper way to procure his blessing on the work of our hands for the next.

(3.) We have here the disposal of the collection thus made. The apostle would have every thing ready against he came, and therefore gave direction as before, *that there be no gatherings when I come,* ver. 2. But when he came, as to the disposal of it he would leave it much to themselves. The charity was theirs, and it was fit they should dispose of it in their own way, so it answered its end, and was applied to the right use. Paul no more pretended to lord it over the purses of his hearers, than over their faith. He would not meddle with their contributions without their consent. He tells them, (1.) That they should give letters of credence, and send messengers of their own with their liberality, *ver. 3.* This would be a proper testimony of their respect and brotherly love to their distressed brethren, to send their gift by members of their own body, trusty and tender-hearted, that would have compassion on their suffering brethren, and a Christian concern for them, and not defraud them. It would argue they were very hearty in this service, when they should send some of their own body on so long and hazardous a journey or voyage, to convey their liberality. Note, we should not only charitably relieve our fellow-Christians, but do it in such a way as will best signify our compassion to them, and cure of them. (2.) He offers to go with their messengers; if they thought proper, *ver. 4.* His business as an apostle was *not to serve tables*, but to *give himself to the word and prayer*. But yet he was never wanting to set afoot or help forward a work of charity, when an opportunity offered. He would go to Jerusalem to carry the contributions of the church of Corinth to their suffering brethren, rather than they should go without them, or the charity of the Corinthians fail of a due effect. It was no hindrance to his preaching work, but a great furtherance to the success of it, to shew such a tender and benign disposition of mind. Note, Ministers are doing their proper business, when they are promoting or helping in works of charity. Paul stirs up the Corinthians to gather for the relief of the churches in Judea, and he is ready to go with their messengers to convey what is gathered: and he is still in the way of his duty, in the business of his office.

5. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: (for I do pass through Macedonia). 6. And it may be that I will abide, yea and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. 7. For I will not see you now by the way, but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. 8. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. 9. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are many adversaries*.

In this passage the apostle notifies, and explains his purpose of coming to visit them. Concerning which, observe, (1.) *His purpose.* He intended to pass out of Asia, where he now was, *ver. 8—19.* and to go through Macedonia, in Achaia, where Corinth was, and to stay some time with them, and perhaps the winter, *ver. 5, 6.* He had long laboured in this church, and done much good amongst them, and had his heart set upon doing much more, (if God saw fit,) and therefore he had it in his thoughts to see them, and stay with them. Note, The heart of a truly Christian minister must be much towards that people among whom he has laboured long, and with remarkable success. No wonder Paul was willing to see Corinth, and stay with them as long as the other duties of his office would permit. Though some among this people despised him, and made a faction against him, doubtless there were many who loved him tenderly, and paid him all the respect due to an apostle, and their spiritual father. And is it any wonder he should be willing to visit them, and stay with them? And as to the rest who now carried it with disrespect, he might hope to reduce them to a better temper, and thereby rectify what was out of order in the church, by staying amongst them for some time. It is plain he hoped for some good effect, because he saith he intended to stay, *that they might bring him on his journey, whithersoever he went,* *ver. 6.* Not barely bring him going, as we say, accompanying him a little way on the road, but expedite and furnish him for his journey, help and encourage him to it, and provide him for it. He is to be understood of being brought forward in his journey, after a godly sort, as it is expressed, 3 John, *ver. 6.* so as *nothing might be wanting to him*, as himself speaks, *Tit. iii. 13.* His stay amongst them he hoped would cure the factious humour, and reconcile them to himself and their duty. Note, It was a just reason for an apostle to make his abode in a place, that he had a prospect of doing good. (2.) His excuse for not seeing them now, *viz.* Because it would be *only by the way,* *ver. 7.* *in transitu, en passant.* It would only be a transient visit. He would not see them, because he could not stay with them. Such a visit would neither give him nor them any satisfaction or advantage. It would rather raise the appetite than regale it, rather heighten their desires of being together than satisfy them. He loved them so, that he longed for an opportunity to stay with them, take up his abode amongst them for some length of time. This would be more pleasing to himself, and more serviceable to them, than a cursory visit in his way. And therefore he would not see them now, but another time when he could tarry longer. (3.) We have the limitation of this purpose. *I trust to tarry awhile with you, if the Lord permit,* *ver. 7.* Though the apostles wrote under inspiration, they did not know thereby how God would dispose of themselves. Paul had a purpose of coming to Corinth, and staying there, and hoped to do good thereby. This was not a purpose proceeding from an extraordinary motion or impulse of the Spirit of God, not the effect of inspiration. For had it been such, he could not have spoken of it in this manner. A purpose formed thus in him must have been the purpose of God, signified to him by his Spirit. And could he say he would come to Corinth upon this view only, if God permit? *i. e.* that he would execute God's own purpose concerning himself, with God's permission? It is to be understood then of a common purpose formed in his own spirit. And concerning all our purposes, it is fit we should say, we will execute them if the Lord permit. Note, All our purposes must be made with submission to the divine providence. We should say, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this and that,* James iv. 15. It is not in us to effect our own designs, without the divine leave. It is by God's power and permission, and under his direction and conduct, we must do every thing. Heathens have concurred in acknowledging this concern of providence in all our actions and concerns. Sure we should readily own it, and frequently and seriously attend to it.

(4.) We have his purpose expressed of staying at Ephesus for the present.

He says, he would *stay there till Pentecost,* *ver. 8.* It is very probable, he was at the time of writing this epistle in Ephesus, from the passing compared with *ver. 19.* where he says, *The churches of Asia salute you.* A proper salutation from Ephesus, but hardly so proper had he been at Philippi, as the subscription to this epistle in our common copies has it. The churches of Macedonia salute you, had been much more properly inserted in the close of a letter from Philippi, than the other. But,

(5.) We have the reason given for his staying at Ephesus for the present. *Because a great door, and effectual, was opened to him, and there were many adversaries,* *ver. 9.* A great door, and effectual, was opened to him. Many were prepared to receive the gospel at Ephesus, and God gave him great success amongst them. He had brought over many to Christ, and he had great hope of bringing over many more. For this reason he determined to stay a while at Ephesus. Note, Success and a fair prospect of more, was a just reason to determine an apostle to stay and labour in a particular place. And *there are many adversaries*, because a great door, and an effectual, was opened. Note, Great success in the work of the gospel commonly creates many enemies. The devil opposes these most, and makes them most trouble, who most heartily and successfully set themselves to destroy his kingdom. *There were many adversaries*, and therefore the apostle determined to stay. Some think he alludes in this passage to the custom of the Roman Circus, and the doors of it, at which the charioteers were to enter, as their antagonists did at the opposite door. True courage is whetted by opposition. And it is no wonder the Christian courage of the apostle should be animated by the zeal of his adversaries. They were bent to ruin him, and prevent the effect of his ministry at Ephesus, and should he at this time desert his station, and disgrace his character and doctrine? No, the opposition of adversaries only animated his zeal. He was *in nothing daunted by his adversaries*, but the more they raged and opposed, the more he exerted himself. *Should such a man as he flee?* Note, Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirit of faithful and successful ministers, but only warm their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. Indeed, to labour in vain is heartless and discouraging. This damps the spirit, and breaks the heart. But success will give life and vigour to a minister, though enemies rage and blaspheme, and persecute. It is not the opposition of enemies, but the hardness and obstinacy of his hearers, and the backslidings and revolt of professors, that damp a faithful minister and break his heart.

10. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. 11. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. 12. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

In this passage he (1.) Recommends Timothy to them in several particulars. As, (1.) He bids them take care, that he should *be among them without fear,* *ver. 10.* Timothy was sent by the apostle to correct the abuses crept in among them, and not only to direct, but to blame, and censure, and reprove those that deserved. They were all in factions, and no doubt the mutual strife and hatred ran very high amongst them. There were some very rich, as it is probable, and many very proud upon account both of their outward wealth and spiritual gifts. Proud spirits cannot easily bear reproof. It was reasonable therefore to think young Timothy might be roughly used. And the apostle warns them against using him ill. Not but that he was prepared for the worst: but whatever his firmness and prudence might be, it was their duty to behave themselves well towards him, and not discourage or dishearten him in his Lord's work. They should not fly out into resentment at his reproof. Note, Christians should bear faithful reproof from their ministers, and not terrify or discourage them from doing their duty. (2.) He warns them against *despising him,* *ver. 11.* He was but a young man, and alone, as Occumenius observes. He had no one to back him, and his own youthful face and years commanded but little reverence, and therefore the great pretenders to wisdom amongst them might be apt to entertain contemptuous thoughts of him. Now, says the apostle, guard against this. Not that he distrusted Timothy; he knew that himself would do nothing to bring contempt on his character; he would do nothing to make his youth despicable. But pride was a reigning sin among the Corinthians, and such a caution was but too necessary. Note, Christians should be very careful not to pour contempt on any, but especially on ministers, the faithful ministers of Christ. These, whether young or old, are to be had in high esteem for their works sake. (3.) He tells them, they should give him all due encouragement, use him well whilst he was with them, and as an evidence of this they should send him away in friendship, and well prepared for his journey back again to Paul. This, as I have observed, is the meaning of *bringing him on his journey in peace,* *ver. 11.* Note, Faithful ministers are not only to be well received by a people, among whom they may for a season minister, but are to be sent away with due respect.

(2.) He assigns the reasons why they should carry it thus towards Timothy. (1.) Because he was employed in the same work as Paul, and acted in it by the same authority, *ver. 10.* He did not come on Paul's errand amongst them, nor to do his work, but the work of the Lord. Though he was not an apostle, he was assistant to one, and was sent upon this very business by a divine commission. And therefore to vex his spirit would be to grieve the holy Spirit. To despise him would be to despise him that sent him, *i. e.* not Paul, but Paul's Lord and theirs. Note, *They that work the work of the Lord*, should be neither terrified nor despised, but treated with all tenderness and respect. Such are all the faithful ministers of the word, though not all in the same rank and degree: pastors and teachers as well as apostles and evangelists. And whilst they are doing their duty, are to be treated with honour and respect. (2.) Another reason is implied: As they were to esteem him for his work's sake, so also for Paul's sake, who had sent him to Corinth; not of his own errand indeed, but to work the work of the Lord. *Conduct him forth in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren,* *ver. 11.* Or, I with the brethren look for him; the original will bear either, *ἐκδοξαί γὰρ αὐτὸν μετὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν*, I am expecting his return, and his report concerning you; and shall judge by your conduct towards him what your regard and respect for me will be. Look to it, that you send him back with no evil report. Paul might expect from the Corinthians, that a messenger from him, upon such an errand, should be regarded and well treated. His services and success among them, his authority with them as an apostle, would challenge this at their hands. They would hardly dare to send back Timothy with

a report that would grieve or provoke the apostle. I and the brethren expect his return, wait for the report he is to make, and therefore do not use him ill, but respect him, regard his message, and let him return in peace.

(3.) He informs them of Apollos's purpose to see them. (1.) He himself had greatly desired him to come to them, *ver. 12.* Though one party amongst them had declared for Apollos against Paul, (if that passage be to be understood literally, *vide chap. iv. 6.*) yet Paul did not hinder Apollos from going to Corinth in his own absence, nay, he pressed him to go thither. He had no suspicions of Apollos, as if he would lessen Paul's interest and respect among them to the advancement of his own. Note, faithful ministers are not apt to entertain jealousies of each other, or suspect of selfish designs. True charity and brotherly love *think no evil.* And where should these reign, if not in the breasts of the ministers of Christ? (2.) Apollos could not be prevailed on for the present to come, but would at a more convenient season. Perhaps their feuds and factions might render the present season improper. He would not go to be at the head of a party, and countenance the dividing and contentious humour. When this was subdued by Paul's epistle to them, and Timothy's ministry amongst them, he might conclude a visit would be more proper. Apostles did not vie with each other, but consulted each other's comfort and usefulness. Paul signifies his great regard to the church of Corinth, when they had used him ill, by intreating Apollos to go to them: and Apollos shews his respect to Paul, and his concern to keep up his character and authority, by declining the journey till the Corinthians were in better temper. Note, It is very becoming the ministers of the gospel, to have and manifest a concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

13. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14. Let all your things be done with charity. 15. I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) 16. That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. 17. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. 18. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

In this passage the apostle (1.) Gives some general advices. As, (1.) That they should watch, *ver. 13.* be wakeful and upon their guard. A Christian is always in danger, and therefore should ever be on the watch. But the danger is greater at some times, and under some circumstances. The Corinthians were in manifest danger upon many accounts. Their feuds ran high, the irregularities among them were very great, there were deceivers got amongst them that endeavoured to corrupt their faith in the most important articles, those without which the practice of virtue and piety could never flourish. And sure in such dangerous circumstances it was their concern to watch. Note, If a Christian would be secure he must be on his guard. And the more his danger is, the greater vigilance is needful for his security. (2.) He advises them to stand fast in the faith, to keep their ground, adhere to the revelation of God, and not give it up for the wisdom of the world, nor suffer it to be corrupted by it. Stand for the faith of the gospel, and maintain it even to death, and stand in it, so as to abide in the profession of it, and feel, and yield to its influence. Note, A Christian should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert or renounce it. It is by this faith alone he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation, it is by faith we stand, *2 Cor. i. 24.* It is by this we must overcome the world, *1 John v. 4.* Both when it fawns and when it frowns, when it tempts and when it terrifies. We must stand therefore in the faith of the gospel, if we would maintain our integrity. (3.) He advises them to act like men and be strong; act the manly, firm and resolved part. Behave strenuously in opposition to the ill men that would divide and corrupt you. Those who would split you into factions, or seduce you from the faith. Be not terrified nor inveigled by them; but shew yourselves men in Christ by your steadiness, by your sound judgment, and firm resolution. Note, Christians should be manly and firm in all their contests with their enemies, in defending their faith, and maintaining their integrity. They should in an especial manner be so in those points of faith, that lie at the foundation of sound and practical religion: such as were attacked among the Corinthians. These must be maintained with solid judgment and strong resolution. (4.) He advises them to do every thing in charity, *ver. 14.* Our zeal and constancy must be consistent with charity. When the apostle would have us play the man for our faith and religion, he puts in a caution against playing the devil for it. We may defend our faith, but we must at the same time maintain our innocence, and not devour and destroy, and think with ourselves that the wrath of man will work the righteousness of God, *James i. 21.* Note, Christians should be careful that charity not only reign in their hearts, but shine out in their lives, nay, in their most manly defences of the faith of the gospel. There is a great difference between constancy and cruelty, between Christian firmness and feverish wrath and transport. Christianity never appears to so much advantage, as when the charity of Christians is most conspicuous; when they can bear with their mistaken brethren, and oppose the open enemies of their holy faith in love; when every thing is done in charity, when they carry it towards one another, and towards all men with a spirit of meekness and goodwill.

(2.) He gives some particular directions, how they should carry it towards some that had been eminently serviceable to the cause of Christ among them. (1.) He gives us their character. (1.) The household of Stephanas is mentioned by him, and their character is, that they were the first-fruits of Achaia, the first converts to Christianity in that region of Greece in which Corinth was. Note, It is an honourable character to any man to be early a Christian, betimes in Christ. But they had moreover addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, to serve the saints. They have disposed and devoted themselves, *ἑαυτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς*, to serve the saints, to do service to the saints. It is not meant of the ministry of the word properly, but of serving them in other respects, supplying their wants, helping and assisting them upon all occasions, both in their temporal and spiritual concerns. The family of Stephanas seems to have been a family of rank and importance in those parts, and yet they willingly offered themselves to this service. Note, It is an honour to persons of the highest rank to devote themselves to the service of the saints. I do not mean to change ranks, and become proper servants to their inferiors, but freely and voluntarily to help them, and do good to them in all their concerns. (2.) He mentions Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, as coming to him from the church of Corinth. The account he gives of them is, that they sup-

plied the deficiencies of the church towards him, and by so doing refreshed his spirit and theirs, *ver. 17, 18.* i. e. they gave him a more perfect account of the state of the church by word of mouth than he could acquire by their letter, and by that means quieted his mind much, and upon their return from him would quiet the minds of the Corinthians. Report had made their case much worse than it was in fact, and their letters had not explained it enough to give the apostle satisfaction; but he had been made more easy by converse with them. It was a very good office they did by truly stating facts, and removing the ill opinion Paul had received by common fame. They came to him with a truly Christian intention to set the apostle right, and give him as favourable sentiments of the church as they could, as peace-makers. Note, It is a great refreshment of the spirit of a faithful minister, to hear better of a people by wise and good men of their own body, than by common report; to find himself misinformed concerning them; that matters are not as bad as they had been represented. It is a grief to him to hear ill of those he loves; it glads his heart to hear the report is false. And the greater value he has for those that give him this information, and the more he can depend upon their truth, the greater is his joy.

(2.) Upon this account of the men, he directs how they should carry it towards them, and (1.) He would have them acknowledged, *ver. 18.* i. e. owned and respected. They deserve it for their good offices. Those who serve the saints, those who consult the honour and good esteem of the churches, and are concerned to wipe off reproaches from them, and take off from the ill opinion fame had propagated, are to be valued and esteemed and loved. They who discover so good a spirit cannot easily be over-valued. (2.) He advises, that they should submit themselves to such, and to all who helped with the apostles and laboured, *ver. 16.* This is not to be understood of subjection to proper superiors, but of a voluntary acknowledgment of their worth. They were persons to whom they owed peculiar respect, and whom they should have in veneration. Note, It is a venerable character they bear, who serve the saints, and labour hard to help the success of the gospel; who countenance and encourage the faithful ministers of Christ, and endeavour to promote their usefulness. Such should be had in honourable esteem.

19. The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. 21. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. 22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, maran-atha. 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The apostle closes this epistle, (1.) With salutations to the church of Corinth, (1.) From those of Asia, from Priscilla, and Aquila, (who seem to have been at this time inhabitants of Ephesus, *vide Acts xviii. 26.*) with the church in their house, *ver. 19.* and from all the brethren, *ver. 20.* viz. at Ephesus, where it is highly probable at least Paul then was. All these saluted the church of Corinth by Paul. Note, Christianity does by no means destroy civility and good manners. Paul could find room in an epistle treating of very important matters, to send the salutations of friends. Religion should promote a courteous and obliging temper towards all. They misrepresent and reproach it who would take any encouragement from it to be sad and morose. Some of these, salute them much in the Lord. Note, Christian salutations are not empty compliments: they carry in them real expressions of good-will, and are attended with hearty recommendations to the divine grace and blessing. They who salute in the Lord, wish their brethren all good from the Lord, and breathe out their good wishes in fervent prayers. We read also of a church in a private family, *ver. 19.* It is very probable, that the family itself is called the church in their house. Note, Every Christian family should in some respects be a Christian church. In some cases (as for instance, were they cast away on a foreign shore, where there are no other Christians) they should be a church themselves, if large enough, and live in the use of all ordinances; but in common cases they should live under the direction of Christian rules, and daily offer up Christian worship. Wherever two or three are gathered together, and Christ is amongst them, there is a church. (2.) To these salutations he subjoins, (1.) An advice, that they should greet one another with an holy kiss, *ver. 20.* or with sincere good-will. A tacit proof of their feuds and factions. When the churches of Asia, and the Christian brethren so remote, did so heartily salute them in the Lord, and own and love them as brethren, and expressed so much good-will to them, it would be a shame for them not to own and love one another as brethren. Note, The love of the brethren should be a powerful incentive to mutual love. When the other churches of Christ love us all, we are very culpable, if we do not love one another. (2.) He subjoins his own salutation. The salutation of me Paul, with my own hand, *ver. 21.* His amanuensis, it is reasonable to think, wrote the rest of his epistle from his mouth, but at the close it was fit himself should sign it, that they might know it to be genuine; and therefore it is added, *2 Thess. iii. 17.* Which is my token in every epistle; the mark of its being genuine: so he wrote in every epistle which he did wholly pen, as he did that to the Galatians, *Gal. vi. 11.* Note, Those churches to whom apostolical letters were sent were duly certified of their being authentic and divine. Nor would Paul be behind the rest of his brethren in respect to the Corinthians, and therefore after he has given their salutations, he adds his own.

(2.) With a very solemn warning to them. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha, *ver. 22.* We sometimes need words of threatening, that we may fear. Blessed is he, saith the wise man, who feareth always. Holy fear is a very good friend, both to holy faith and holy living. And how much reason have all Christians to fear falling under this doom! If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha. Where observe, (1.) The person described, who is liable to this doom. He that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ, *ἁμάρτανος*, as some think. He that blasphemes Christ, disowns his doctrine, slights and contemns his institutions, or through pride of human knowledge and learning despises his revelations. It stands here as a warning to the Corinthians, and a rebuke of their criminal behaviour. It is an admonition to them not to be led away from the simplicity of the gospel, or those principles of it which were the great motives to purity of life, by pretenders to science, by the wisdom of the world, which would call their religion folly; and its most important doctrines absurd and ridiculous. Those men had a spite at Christ, and if the Corinthians gave ear to their seducing speeches, they were in danger of apostatising from him. Against this he gives them here a very solemn caution. Do not give into such a conduct, if you would escape

escape the severest vengeance. Note, Professed Christians will, by contempt of Christ, and revolt from him, bring upon themselves the most dreadful destruction. Some understand the words as they lie, in their plain and obvious meaning, for such as are without holy and sincere affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many who have his name much in their mouths have no true love to him in their hearts, *will not have him to rule over them*, Luke xix. 27. No, not though they have very towering hopes of being saved by him. And none love him in truth that do not love his laws and *keep his commandments*. Note, There are many Christians in name, that do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. But can any thing be more criminal or provoking! What, not love the most glorious lover in the world! Him who loved us, and gave himself for us! Who shed his blood for us, to testify his love to us, and that after heinous wrong and provocation! What had we a power of loving for, if we are unmoved with such love as this, and without affection to such a Saviour? But, (2.) We have here their doom. Let him be *anathema*, *maran-atha* lie under the heaviest and most dreadful curse. Let him be separated from the people of God, from the favour of God, and delivered up to his final, irrevocable, and inexorable vengeance. Maran-atha is a Syriac phrase, and signifies *the Lord cometh*. That very Lord whom they do not love, to whom they are inwardly and really disaffected, whatever outward profession they make, he is coming to *execute judgment*. And to be exposed to his wrath, to be divided to his left hand, to be condemned by him, how dreadful! If he will destroy, who can save? Those who fall under his condemning sentence must perish, and that for ever. Note, They who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, must perish without remedy. *The wrath of God abides on every one who believes not on the Son*, John iii. 36. And true faith in Christ will evermore be productive of sincere love to him. They who love him not, cannot be believers in him.

(3.) The apostle closes all with his good wishes for them, and expressions of good-will to them. (1.) With his good wishes. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*, ver. 23. As much as if he had said, Though I

warn you against falling under his displeasure, I heartily wish you an interest in his dearest love, and his eternal favour. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comprehends in it all that is good, for time or eternity. To wish our friends may have this grace with them, is wishing them the utmost good. And this we should wish all our friends and brethren in Christ. We can wish them nothing more, and we should wish them nothing less. We should heartily pray, that they may value, and seek, and obtain, and secure the grace and good-will of our Lord and judge. Note, The most solemn warnings are the result of the tenderest affection and the greatest good will. We may tell our brethren and friends with great plainness and *pathos*, that if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ they must perish, whilst we heartily wish the grace of Christ may be with them. Nay, we must give them this warning, that they may prize and lay hold of this grace. Note also, How much true Christianity enlarges our hearts. It makes us wish those whom we love the blessings of both worlds. For this is implied in wishing the grace of Christ to be with them. And therefore it is no wonder, (2.) That the apostle should close all with the declaration of his love to them in Christ Jesus. *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus*, Amen. ver. 24. He had dealt very plainly with them in this epistle, and told them of their faults with just severity; but to shew that he was not transported with passion, he parts with them in love, makes solemn profession of his love to them, nay to them all in *Christ Jesus*, i. e. for Christ's sake. He tells them that his heart was with them, that he truly loved them, but lest this after all should be deemed flattery and insinuation, he adds, that his affection was the result of his religion, and would be guided by the rules of it. His heart would be with them, and he would bear them dear affection, as long as their hearts were with Christ, and they bore true affection to his cause and interest. Note, We should be cordial lovers of all that are in Christ, and that love him in sincerity. Not but we should love all men, and wish them well, and do them what good is in our power; but they must have our dearest affection, who are dear to Christ and lovers of him. May our love be with all them that are in *Christ Jesus*. Amen.

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF

St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Completed by Mr. D. May

IN his former epistle the apostle had signified his intention of coming to Corinth as he passed through Macedonia, chap. xvi. 6. but being providentially hindered for some time, he writeth this Second Epistle to them about a year after the former; and there seem to be these two great urgent occasions. 1. The case of the incestuous person that lay under censure, required that with all speed he should be restored and received again into communion. This therefore he giveth directions about, chap. ii. and afterwards, chap. vii. he declareth the satisfaction he had upon the intelligence he received of their good behaviour in that affair. 2. There was a contribution now making for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which he exhorteth the Corinthians to join in, chap. viii. and ix.

There are divers other things very observable in this epistle, e. g. (1.) The account the apostle giveth of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, chap. ii. (2.) The comparison he maketh between the Old and New Testament dispensation, chap. iii. (3.) The manifold sufferings that he and his fellow-labourers met with, and the motives and encouragements for their diligence and patience, chap. iv. v. (4.) The caution he giveth the Corinthians against mingling themselves with unbelievers, chap. vi. (5.) The way and manner in which he justified himself and his apostleship from the opprobrious insinuation and accusations of false teachers that endeavoured to ruin his reputation at Corinth, chap. x. xi. xii. and throughout the whole epistle.

CHAP. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1, 2. the apostle begins with the narrative of his troubles and God's goodness which he had met with in Asia, by way of thanksgiving to God, ver. 3—6. and for the edification of the Corinthians, ver. 7—11. Then he attests his and his fellow-labourers integrity, ver. 12, 13, 14. and afterwards vindicateth himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy, ver. 14—24.

1. PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: 2. Grace be to you, and peace from God our father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the introduction to this epistle, in which we have,

(1.) The inscription; and therein, 1. The person from whom it was sent, viz. Paul: he called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. The apostleship itself was ordained by Jesus Christ according to the will of God: and Paul was called to it by Jesus Christ according to the will of God. He joineth Timothy with himself in writing this epistle: not because he needed his assistance, but that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established: and his dignifying Timothy with the title

of brother (either in the common faith, or in the work of the ministry) sheweth the humility of this great apostle, and his desire to recommend Timothy, though he was then a young man, to the esteem of the Corinthians and give him a reputation among the churches. 2. The persons to whom this epistle was sent, viz. The church of God at Corinth; and not only to them, but also to all the saints in all Achaia, i. e. to all the Christians who lived in the region round about. Note, In Christ Jesus no distinction is made between the inhabitants of the city or country. All Achaia stands upon a level in his account.

(2.) The salutation, or apostolical benediction; which is the same as in his former epistle; and therein the apostle desireth the two great and comprehensive blessings, *grace* and *peace*, for those Corinthians. These two benefits are fitly joined together, because there is no good and lasting peace without true grace, and both of them do come from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the procurer and dispenser of these benefits to fallen man, and is prayed to as God.

3. Blessed be God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by

by Christ. 6. And whether we be afflicted, *it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

After the foregoing preface the apostle begins,

First, With the narrative of God's goodness to him and his fellow-labourers in their manifold tribulations; which he speaketh of,

[1.] By way of thanksgiving to God, and to advance the divine glory, ver. 3-6. And it is fit that in all things, and in the first place, God be glorified. Observe,

(1.) The *object* of the apostle's thanksgiving, to whom he offereth up blessing and praise, namely the blessed God, *who only is to be praised*; whom he describeth by several glorious and amiable titles, 1. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: $\alpha\theta\epsilon\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\rho\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\varsigma\ \text{I}\eta\varsigma\upsilon\varsigma\ \chi\epsilon\iota\varsigma\tau\circ\varsigma$. God is the Father of Christ's divine nature by eternal generation: of his human nature by miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin; and of Christ, as God-man, and our Redeemer, by covenant relation; and in and through him as Mediator, our God and our Father, John xv. 17. In the *Old Testament* we often meet with this title, *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob*, to denote God's covenant relation to them and their seed; and in the *New Testament* God is styled *the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to denote his covenant-relation to the Mediator and his spiritual seed, Gal. iii. 16. 2. *The father of mercies*. There are a multitude of tender mercies in God *essentially*, and all mercies are from God *originally*: Mercy is his genuine offering, and his delight; *he delighteth in mercy*, Micah vii. 18. 3. *The God of all comfort*. From him proceedeth the COMFORTER, John xv. 26. He giveth the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, ver. 20. All our comforts come from God, and our *sweetest* comforts are in him.

2. The *reasons* of the apostle's thanksgiving, which are these. 1. The benefits that he himself and his companions had received from God. For God had comforted them in all their tribulation, ver. 4. In the world they had trouble, but in Christ they had peace. The apostles met with many tribulations, but they found comfort in them all. Their sufferings (which are called *the sufferings of Christ*, ver. 5. because Christ sympathized with his members when suffering for his sake) did abound, but their consolation by Christ did abound also. Note, 1. Then are we qualified to receive the comforts of God's mercies, when we set ourselves to give him the glory of them. 2. Then we speak best of God and his goodness, when we speak from our own experience, and in telling others, tell God also what he hath done for our souls.

2. The advantage which others might receive. For God intended that they should be able to comfort others, in trouble, ver. 4. by communicating to them their experiences of the divine goodness and mercy; and the sufferings of good men have a tendency to this good end; ver. 6. when they are endured with faith and patience. Note, 1. What favours God bestoweth on us are intended not only to make us *cheerful ourselves*, but also that we may be *useful* to others. 2. If we do imitate the faith and patience of good men in their afflictions, we may hope to partake of their consolations here, and their salvation hereafter.

7. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. 8. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. 10. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us: 11. Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

In these verses the apostle speaketh,

[2.] For the encouragement and edification of the Corinthians. And tells them, ver. 7. of his persuasion or *steadfast hope*, that they should receive benefits by the troubles he and his companions in labour and travel had met with: that their faith should not be weakened, but their consolations increased. In order to this he tells them,

(1.) What their sufferings had been, ver. 8. *We would not have you ignorant of our trouble*. It was convenient for the churches to know what were the sufferings of their ministers. It is not certain what particular troubles in Asia are here referred to; whether the tumult raised by Demetrius at Ephesus, mentioned Acts xix. or the fight with beasts at Ephesus, mentioned in the former epistle, chap. xv. or some other trouble, for the apostle was in deaths often. This however is evident, they were great tribulations. They were *pressed out of measure*, to a very extraordinary degree, above the common strength of men, or of ordinary Christians, to bear up under them, insomuch that they despaired even of life, ver. 8. and thought they should have been killed, or have fainted away and expired.

(2.) What they did in their distress. They trusted in God. And therefore they were brought to that extremity, that they should not trust to themselves, but in God, ver. 9. Note, God often bringeth his people into great straits, that they may apprehend their own insufficiency to help themselves, and might be induced to place their trust and hope in his all-sufficiency. Our extremity is God's opportunity. In the mount will the Lord be seen; and we may safely trust in God which raiseth the dead, ver. 9. God's raising the dead is a proof of his almighty power: He that can do that, can do any thing, can do all things, and is worthy to be trusted in at all times. Abraham's faith fastened upon this instance of the divine power. He believed God who quickeneth the dead, Rom. iv. 17. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust in God, who can bring back not only from the gates, but from the jaws of death.

(3.) What the deliverance was they had obtained, and this was seasonable and continued. Their hope and trust was not in vain, nor shall any that trust in him be ashamed. God had delivered them, and did still deliver them, ver. 10. Having obtained help of God, they continued to that day, Acts xxvi. 22.

(4.) What use they made of this deliverance. We trust that he will yet deliver us, ver. 10. That God will deliver to the end, and preserve to his heavenly kingdom. Note, Past experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and they lay great obligations to trust in God for time to

come. We reprove our experiences if we distrust God in future straits, who hath delivered us in former troubles. David, even when a young man, and had but a small stock of experience, argued after this manner the apostle here argueth. 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

(5.) What was desired of the Corinthians upon this account, viz. That they would help together by prayer for them, ver. 11. by social prayer, agreeing and joining together in prayer on their behalf. Note, Our trusting in God must not supersede the use of any proper and appointed means; and prayer is one of those means. We should pray for ourselves and for one another. The apostle had himself a great interest in the throne of grace, yet he desired the help of others prayers. And if we thus help one another by our prayers, we may hope for an occasion of giving thanks by many for answer of prayer. And it is our duty not only to help one another, but in praise and thanksgiving, and thereby to make suitable returns for benefits received.

12. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. 13. For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge, and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end. 14. As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, The apostle in these verses attests their integrity by the sincerity of their conversation. This he doth not in a way of boasting and vain-glory, but as one good reason the more comfortably to trust in God, and their desiring the help of prayer, Heb. xiii. 18. and for the necessary vindication of himself from the aspersions of some persons at Corinth, who reproached his person and questioned his apostleship. And here consider,

(1.) He appealeth to the testimony of conscience with rejoicing, ver. 12. In which observe,

1. The witness appealed to, namely, conscience; which is instead of a thousand witnesses. This is God's deputy in the soul, and the voice of conscience is the voice of God. They rejoiced in the testimony of conscience, when their enemies reproached them, and were enraged against them. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, if that be right and upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing at all times and in all conditions.

2. The testimony this witness gave. And here take notice, conscience witnessed. (1.) Concerning their conversation, i. e. their constant course and tenor of life: and by that we may judge of ourselves, and not by this or that single act. (2.) Concerning the nature or manner of their conversation; that it was in simplicity and godly sincerity. This blessed apostle was a true Israelite, a man of plain dealing, you might know where to have him: He was not a man that seemed to be one thing, and was another, but a man of sincerity. (3.) Concerning the principle they acted from in all their conversation, both in the world, and towards these Corinthians; and that was not fleshly wisdom, or carnal politics and worldly views, but it was the grace of God, a vital gracious principle in their heart, that cometh from God, and tendeth to God. And then will our conversation be well ordered, when we live and act under the influence and command of such a gracious principle in the heart.

(2.) He appealeth to the knowledge of the Corinthians with hope and confidence, ver. 13, 14.

Their conversation did in part fall under the observation of the Corinthians, and these knew how they behaved themselves, how *holy, and justly, and unblameably*; they never found any thing in them unbecoming an honest man. This they had acknowledged in part already, and he doubted not but they would still do so to the end, i. e. that they should never have any good reason to think or say otherwise of him, but that he was an honest man. And so there would be mutual rejoicing in one another. We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. Note, It is happy when ministers and people do rejoice in each other here; and this joy will be complete in that day when the great Shepherd of the sheep shall appear.

15. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit: 16. And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. 17. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? 18. But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. 21. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: 22. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. 23. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. 24. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Thirdly, The apostle vindicateth himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy, in that he did not hold his purpose of coming to them at Corinth. His adversaries there sought all occasions to blemish his character, and reflect upon his conduct; and it seemed they took hold of this handle to reproach his person and discredit his ministry. Now for his justification,

(1.) He avers the sincerity of his intention, ver. 15, 16, 17. and he doth this in confidence of their good opinion of him, and that they would believe him, when he assured them he was minded, or did really intend to come to them; and that with design, not that he might receive, but that they might receive.

receive a *second benefit*, i. e. some further advantage by his ministry. He tells them he had not herein *used lightness*, ver. 17. (that as he aimed not at any secular advantage to himself, for his purpose was not *according to the flesh*, i. e. with carnal views and aims; so) it was not a rash and inconsiderate resolution he had taken up, for he had laid his measures thus of *passing by them to Macedonia, and coming again to them from Macedonia, in his way to Judea*, ver. 16. and therefore they might conclude it was for some weighty reasons that he had altered his purpose; and that with him there was not yea, yea, and nay, nay, ver. 17. i. e. He was not to be accused of levity and inconstancy, or a contradiction between his words and intentions. Note, Good men should be careful to preserve the reputation of sincerity and constancy: they *should* not resolve but upon mature deliberation, and they *will* not change their resolves but for weighty reasons.

(2.) He would not have the Corinthians to infer that his gospel was false or uncertain, or that it was contradictory in itself, or unto truth, ver. 18, 19. For if it had been so, that he had been fickle in his purposes, or even false in the promises he made of coming to them, (which he was not justly to be accused of, and so some understand this expression, ver. 18. *Our word towards you was not yea and nay*) yet it would not follow that the gospel preached not only by him, but also by others in full agreement with him, was either false or doubtful. For *God is true*. And the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is true. The true God and eternal life, Jesus Christ whom the apostle preached, is not yea and nay, but in him was yea, ver. 9. nothing but infallible truth. And the promises of God in Christ are not yea and nay, but yea and amen, ver. 20. There is an inviolable constancy and unquestionable sincerity and certainty in all the parts of the gospel of Christ. If in the promises that the ministers of the gospel do make as common men, and about their own affairs, they see cause sometimes to vary from them, yet the promises of the gospel-covenant which they preach stand firm and inviolable. Bad men are false; good men are fickle; but *God is true*, neither fickle nor false.

The apostle having mentioned the stability of the divine promises, maketh a digression to illustrate this great and sweet truth, That all the promises of God are yea and amen. For,

1. They are the promises of the God of truth, ver. 20. of him *that cannot lie*, whose truth as well as mercy endureth for ever.

2. They are made in Christ Jesus, ver. 20. the *amen*, the true and faithful witness; he hath purchased and ratified the covenant and promises, and is the *surety of the covenant*, Heb. vii. 22.

3. They are confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He doth *establish* Christians in the faith of the gospel; he hath *anointed* them with his sanctifying grace, which in scripture is often compared to oil; he hath *sealed* them, for their security and confirmation; and he is given as an *earnest* in their hearts, ver. 21, 22. An earnest doth secure the promise, and is part of the payment. The illumination of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting light; the quickening of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an earnest of everlasting joy. Note, The veracity of God, the mediation of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the promises shall be sure to all the seed, and the accomplishment of them shall be to the *glory of God*, ver. 20. for the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulness.

(3.) The apostle giveth a good reason why he did not come to Corinth, as was expected, ver. 23. It was that he might *spare* them. They ought therefore to own his kindness and tenderness. He knew there were things amiss among them, and such as deserved censure, but was desirous to shew tenderness. He assureth them this was the true reason, after this very solemn manner, *I call God for a record upon my soul*: a way of speaking not justifiable where used in trivial matters: But this was very justifiable in the apostle for his necessary vindication, and for the credit and usefulness of his ministry, which was struck at by his opposers. He addeth, to prevent mistakes, that he did not pretend to *any dominion over their faith*, ver. 24. Christ only is the Lord of our faith, he is the *author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. He doth reveal to us what we must believe. Paul and Apollos, and the rest of the apostles, were *but ministers by whom they believed*, 1 Cor. iii. 5. and so the *helpers of their joy*, even the joy of faith. For *by faith we stand firm*, and live safely and comfortably. Our strength and ability are *owing to faith*, and our comfort and joy *must flow from faith*.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter the apostle proceedeth in the account of the reasons why he did not come to Corinth, ver. 1—4. Then he writeth concerning the incestuous person that lay under censure; and giveth direction for the restoring him, together with the reasons for their so doing, ver. 5—11. And afterwards informeth them of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, ver. 12—17.

1. **B**UT I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. 2. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? 3. And I wrote this same unto you, lest when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice, having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. 4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

In these verses,

(1.) The apostle proceedeth in giving an account of the reason why he did not come to Corinth as was expected, namely, because he was unwilling to grieve them, or be grieved by them, ver. 1; 2. *He had determined not to come to them in heaviness*; which yet he should have done had he come and found scandal among them not duly animadverted upon: this would have been cause of grief both to him and them; for their sorrow or joy at meeting would have been mutual. If he had made them sorry, that would have been a sorrow to himself, for there would have been none to have made him glad. But his desire was to have a cheerful meeting with them; and not to have it embittered by any unhappy occasion of disagreeing.

(2.) He tells them it was to the same intent that he wrote his former epistle, ver. 3, 4. viz. 1. *That he might not have sorrow from them of whom he ought to rejoice*; and that he had written to them *in confidence* of their doing what was requisite in order to their benefit and his comfort. The particular thing referred to, as appeareth by the following verses, was the case of the incestuous person about whom he had written in the first epistle, chap. v. Nor was the apostle disappointed in his expectation. 2. He

assureth them that he did not design to grieve them, but to testify his love to them, and that he wrote to them with much *anguish and affliction* in his own heart, and with great affection to them. He had *written with tears*, that they might know his abundant love to them. Note, 1. That even in reproofs, admonitions, and acts of discipline, faithful ministers shew their love. 2. That needful censures, and the exercise of church discipline towards offenders, are a grief to tender-spirited ministers, and are administered with regret.

5. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. 6. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many. 7. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. 9. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 10. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also; for if I forgave any thing to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgive I it, in the person of Christ; 11. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

In these verses the apostle treateth concerning the incestuous person that had been excommunicated, which seemeth to be one principal cause of his writing this epistle.

Here observe,

(1.) He tells them the crime of that person had grieved him *in part*; and that he was grieved also with a *part* of them, who, notwithstanding this scandal had been found among them, were *puffed up, and had not mourned*, 1 Cor. v. 2. However he was unwilling to lay too heavy a charge upon the whole church, especially seeing they had cleared themselves in that matter by observing the directions he had formerly given them.

(2.) He tells them that the punishment which had been inflicted upon this offender, was sufficient, ver. 6. The desired effect was obtained, for the man was humbled, and they had shewn the proof their obedience to his directions.

(3.) He therefore directed them, with all speed, to restore the excommunicated person, or to receive him again to their communion ver. 7, 8. This is expressed several ways; he beseecheth them to *forgive* him, i. e. to release him from church-censures, for they could not remit the guilt or offence against God; and also to *comfort* him; for in many cases the comfort of penitents dependeth not only upon their reconciliation with God, but with men also, whom they have scandalized or injured. They must also *confirm their love* to him, i. e. they should shew their proofs and censures did proceed from love to his person, as well as hatred to his sin; and that their design was to reform, not to ruin him. Or thus: If his fall had weakened their love to him, that they could not take that satisfaction in him as formerly; yet now that he was recovered by repentance, they must renew and confirm their love to him.

(4.) He used several weighty arguments to persuade them to do this, e. g. 1. The case of the penitent called for this; for he was in danger of being *swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*, ver. 7. He was so sensible of his fault, and so much afflicted under his punishment, that he was in danger of falling into despair; and when sorrow is excessive it doth hurt; even sorrow for sin is too great when it onsets for other duties, and driveth men to despair. 2. They had *shewed obedience* to his directions in passing a censure upon him, and now he would have them comply with his desire to restore him, ver. 9. 3. He mentions his readiness to forgive this penitent, and concur with them in this matter; *To whom ye forgive, I forgive also*, ver. 10. i. e. I will readily concur with you in forgiving him. And this he would do for *their sakes*, for love to them, and for their advantage; and for *Christ's sake*, or in his name, as his apostle; and in conformity to his doctrine and example, which is so full of kindness and tender mercy towards all them that truly repent. 4. He giveth another weighty reason, ver. 11. *Lest Satan get an advantage against us*. Not only was there danger lest Satan should get an advantage of the penitent by driving him to despair, but against the churches also, and the apostles or ministers of Christ, by representing them as too rigid and severe, and so frighten people from coming among them.

In this, as in other things, *wisdom is profitable to direct*, so to manage according as the case may be, that the *ministry may not be blamed* for indulging sin on the one hand, or for too great severity towards sinners on the other hand. Note, Satan is a *subtle enemy*, and useth many stratagems to deceive us; and we should not be ignorant of his devices: And he is a *watchful* adversary, ready to take all advantages against us; and we should be very cautious lest we give him any occasion so to do.

12. Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord. 13. I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. 14. Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15. For we are unto God a sweet favour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. 16. To the one we are the favour of death unto death; and to the other the favour of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things? 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

After these directions concerning the excommunicated person, the apostle maketh a long digression to give the Corinthians an account of his travels and labours for the furtherance of the gospel, and what success he had therein; declaring at the same time how much he was concerned for them in their affairs: how he *had no rest in his spirit*, when he found not Titus at Troas, ver. 13. as he did expect, from whom he hoped to have understood more perfectly how it fared with them. And we find afterwards, chap. vii. ver. 5, 6, 7. that when the apostle was come into Macedonia, he

was comforted by the coming of Titus, and the information he gave him concerning them. So that we may look upon all that we read from this second chapter, *ver. 12. to chap. vii. ver. 5.* as a kind of parenthesis. Observe here,

(1.) Paul's unwearied labour and diligence in his work, *ver. 12, 13.* He travelled from place to place to preach the gospel. He went to Thracia from Philippi by sea, *Acts xx. 6.* from thence he went to Macedonia; so that he was prevented from passing by Corinth as he designed, *chap. i. 16.* But though he was prevented in his design, as to the place of working, yet he was unwearied in his work.

(2.) His success in his work. *A great door was opened to him of the Lord, ver. 12.* He had a great deal of work to do wherever he came, and had good success in his work; for God made manifest the favour of his knowledge by him in every place where he came. He had an opportunity to open the door of his mouth freely, and God opened the hearts of his hearers, as the heart of Lydia, *Acts xvi. 14.* and the apostle speaketh of this as a matter of thankfulness to God, and of rejoicing to his soul. *Thanks be to God, saith he, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.* Note, 1. A believer's triumphs are always in Christ. In ourselves we are weak, and have neither joy nor victory, but in Christ we may rejoice and triumph. 2. True believers have constant cause to triumph in Christ, for they are more than conquerors through him that hath loved them, *Rom. viii. 37.* 3. God causeth them to triumph in Christ. It is God that hath given us matter for triumph, and hearts to triumph. To him therefore be the praise and glory of all. 4. The good success of the gospel is a good reason for a Christian's joy and rejoicing.

(3.) The comfort that the apostle and his companions in labour did find, when the gospel was not successful to the salvation of some that heard it, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* Here observe,

1. The different success of the gospel, and its different effects upon several sorts of persons to whom it is preached. The success is different, for some are saved by it, whilst others perish under it. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering the different effects the gospel hath. For, 1. Unto some it is a *favour of death unto death.* Those that are willingly ignorant, and wilfully obstinate, do despise the gospel, as men dislike an ill favour, and therefore they are blinded and hardened by it. It stirs up their corruptions, and exasperateth their spirits. They reject the gospel to their ruin, even to spiritual and eternal death. 2. Unto others the gospel is a *favour of life unto life.* To humble and gracious souls the preaching of the word is most delightful and profitable. As it is sweeter than honey to the taste, so it is more grateful than the most precious odours to the senses, and much more profitable; for as it quickened them at first, when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it maketh them more lively, and will end in eternal life.

2. The awful impressions this matter made upon the minds of the apostle, and should also make upon our spirits. *Who is sufficient for these things, ver. 16.* *It is he; who is worthy to be employed in such weighty work, a work of such vast importance, because of so great consequence? Who is able to perform such a difficult work, that requireth so much skill and industry? The work is great, and our strength is small; yea, of ourselves we have no strength at all. All our sufficiency is of God.* Note, If men did seriously consider what great things depend upon the preaching of the gospel, and how difficult the work of the ministry is, they would be very cautious how they enter upon it, and very careful to perform it well.

3. The comfort which the apostle had under this serious consideration. 1. Because faithful ministers shall be accepted of God, whatever their success be. *We are, if faithful, unto God a secret favour of Christ, ver. 15.* in them that are saved, and in them also that perish. God will accept of sincere intentions, and honest endeavours, though with many they are not successful: Ministers shall be accepted and recompensed, not according to their success, but according to their fidelity. *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, Isa. xlix. 5.* 2. Because his conscience witnessed to his faithfulness, *ver. 17.* Though many did corrupt the word of God, yet the apostle's conscience witnessed to his fidelity. He did not mix his own notions with the doctrines and institutions of Christ; he durst not add to, nor diminish from, the word of God, he was faithful in dispensing the gospel, as he received it from the Lord, and had no secular turn to serve; his aim was to approve himself to God, remembering his eye was always upon him, he therefore spake and acted always as in the sight of God, and therefore in sincerity. Note, What we do in religion is not of God, doth not come from God, will not reach to God, unless it be done in sincerity, as in the sight of God.

C H A P. III.

The apostle maketh an apology for his seeming to commend himself, and is careful not to assume too much to himself, but to ascribe all praise unto God, *ver. 1—5.* He then runs a comparison between the Old Testament and the New, and sheweth the excellency of the latter above the former, *ver. 6—11.* From whence he infers what is the duty of gospel-ministers, and the advantage of those who live under the gospel, above those that lived under the law, *ver. 12, to the end.*

1. DO we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? 2. Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3. For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 4. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.

In these verses,

(1.) The apostle maketh an apology for his seeming to commend himself. He thought it convenient to protest his sincerity to them, because there were some at Corinth who endeavoured to blast his reputation: yet he was not desirous of vain glory. And he tells them,

1. They neither needed nor desired any verbal commendation to them, nor letters testimonial from them, as some others did, meaning the false apostles or teachers, *ver. 1.* Their ministry among them had, without controversy, been truly great and honourable, how little soever their persons were in reality, or how contemptible soever some would have them thought to be.

2. The Corinthians themselves were their real commendation, and a good testimonial for them, that God was with them of a truth, that they were sent of God. *Ye are our epistle, ver. 2.* This was the testimonial they most delighted in, and what was most dear to them, they were written in their hearts? And this they could appeal to upon occasion, for it was or might be known and read of all men. Note, There is nothing more delightful to faithful ministers, nor more to their commendation, than the success of their ministry evidenced in the hearts and lives of them among whom they labour.

(2.) The apostle is careful not to assume too much to himself, but to ascribe all the praise to God. Therefore,

1. He saith they were the epistle of Christ, *ver. 3.* The apostle and others were but instruments, Christ was the author of all the good that was in them. The law of Christ was written in their hearts, and the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts. This epistle was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; nor was it written in tables of stone, as the law of God given to Moses, but on the heart; and that heart not a stony one, but a heart of flesh, upon the fleshy (not fleshly, as fleshliness denoteth sensuality) tables of the heart, i. e. upon hearts that are softened and renewed by divine grace, according to that gracious promise, *I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you a heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26.* This was the good hope the apostle had concerning these Corinthians, *ver. 4.* that their hearts were like the ark of the covenant, containing the tables of the law and the gospel written with the finger, i. e. by the Spirit of the living God.

2. He utterly disclaimeth the taking any praise to themselves, and ascribeth all the glory to God. *We are not sufficient of ourselves, ver. 5.* We could never have made such good impressions on your hearts, nor upon our own: Such is our weakness and inability, that we cannot of ourselves think a good thought, much less raise any good thoughts or affections in other men. *All our sufficiency is of God;* to him therefore is owing all the praise and glory of that good which is done, and from him we must receive grace and strength to do more. This is true concerning ministers and all Christians, the best are no more than what the grace of God maketh them: Our hands are not sufficient for us, but our sufficiency is of God; and his grace is sufficient for us, to furnish us for every good word and work.

6. Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. 7. But if the ministration of death written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; 8. How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious; 9. For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. 11. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Here the apostle runs a comparison between the Old Testament and the New, the law of Moses and the gospel of Jesus Christ: and valueth himself and his fellow-labourers by this, that they were able ministers of the New Testament, that God had made them so, *ver. 6.* And this he doth in answer to the accusations of false teachers, who magnify greatly the law of Moses.

(1.) He distinguisheth between the letter and the spirit, even of the New Testament, *ver. 6.* And as able ministers of the New Testament, they were ministers not merely of the letter, to read the written word, or to preach the letter of the gospel only, but they were ministers of the Spirit also, i. e. the Spirit of God did accompany their ministrations. The letter killeth, this the letter of the law doth, for that is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel, we shall be never the better for so doing, for even that will be a favour of death unto death: but the Spirit of the gospel, going along with the ministry of the gospel, giveth life spiritual, and life eternal.

(2.) He sheweth the difference between the Old Testament and the New, and the excellency of the gospel above the law. For,

1. The Old Testament dispensation was the ministration of death, *ver. 7.* Whereas that of the New Testament is the ministration of life. The law discovered sin, and the wrath and curse of God, that shewed us a God above us, and a God against us; but the gospel discovereth grace and Emanuel, God with us. Upon this account the gospel is more glorious than the law; and yet that had a glory in it, witness the shining of Moses's face, an indication thereof, when he came down from the mount with the tables in his hand, that reflected rays of brightness upon his countenance.

2. The law was the ministration of condemnation, for that condemned and cursed every one that continued not in all things written therein to do them; but the gospel is the ministration of righteousness: Therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed: This sheweth us the just shall live by his faith: This revealeth the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for the obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. The gospel therefore doth so much exceed in glory, that in a manner it doth eclipse the glory of the legal dispensation, *ver. 10.* As the shining of a burning lamp is lost or not regarded, when the sun ariseth and goeth forth in his strength; so there was no glory in the Old Testament in comparison with that of the New.

3. The law is done away, but the gospel doth and shall remain, *ver. 11.* Not only did the glory of Moses's face go away, but the glory of Moses's law is done away also; yea, the law of Moses itself is now abolished, that dispensation was only to continue for a time, and then to vanish away; whereas the gospel shall remain to the end of the world, and is always fresh and flourishing, and remaineth glorious.

12. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. 13. And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. 14. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away, in the reading of the Old Testament: which vail is done away in Christ. 15. But even unto this day when

when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. 16. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. 17. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In these verses the apostle draweth two inferences from what he had said about the Old and New Testament.

(1.) Concerning the duty of the ministers of the gospel to use *great plainness* or clearness of speech: They ought not, like Moses, to put a veil upon their faces, or obscure and darken those things that should make plain. The gospel is a more clear dispensation than the law; the things of God are revealed in the New Testament not in types and shadows: and ministers are much to blame, if they do not set spiritual things, and gospel-truth and grace in the clearest light that is possible. Though the Israelites could not, yet we may look *steadfastly to the end* of what was commanded, but is now *abolished*. We may see the meaning of those types and shadows, by the accomplishment, seeing the *veil is done away in Christ*, and he is come who was the end of the law of righteousness to all them that believe, and whom Moses and all the prophets pointed to and wrote of.

(2.) Concerning the privilege and advantage of those who enjoy the gospel, above those who lived under the law. For,

1. Those who lived under the legal dispensation had *their minds blinded*, ver. 14. and there was a *veil upon their hearts*, ver. 15. Thus it was formerly, and so it was, especially as to them who remained in Judaism after the coming of the Messiah; and the publication of his gospel. Nevertheless the apostle tells us, there is a time coming, when this *veil also shall be taken away*, and *when it [the body of that people] shall turn to the Lord*, ver. 16. Or when any particular person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away; the blindness of the mind, and hardness of heart is cured.

2. The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel is much more happy. For, 1. They have liberty. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, and where he worketh, as he doth under the gospel dispensation, there is liberty*, ver. 17. Freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the servitude of corruption: Liberty of access to God, and freedom of speech in prayer: The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged to run the ways of God's commandments. 2. They have light. For with open face we behold the *glory of the Lord*, ver. 18. The Israelites saw the glory of God in a cloud, which was dark and dreadful: But Christians see the glory of the Lord, as in a glass more clearly and comfortably. It was the peculiar privilege of Moses for God to converse with him face to face in a friendly manner; but now all true Christians do see him more clearly with open face: He sheweth them his glory. 3. This light and liberty is transforming. We are changed *into the same image, from glory to glory*, ver. 18. from one degree of glorious grace unto another, till grace here be consummated, in glory for ever. How much therefore should Christians prize and improve these privileges! We should not rest contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have [an account, (1.) Of the constancy of the apostles and their fellow-labourers in their work. Their constancy is declared, ver. 1. Their sincerity is vouched, ver. 2. An objection is obviated, ver. 3, 4. And their integrity proved, ver. 5, 6, 7. (2.) Of their courage and patience under their sufferings. Where see what their sufferings were, together with their allays, ver. 8—12. And what it was that kept them from sinking and fainting under them, ver. 13, to the end.

1. **T**HEREFORE seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not: 2. But have renounced the hidden thing of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake. 6. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The apostle had in the foregoing chapter been magnifying his office, upon the consideration of the excellency or glory of that gospel about which he did officiate; and now in this chapter his design is to vindicate their ministry from the accusation of false teachers, who charged them as deceitful workers, or endeavoured to prejudice the minds of the people against them on account of their sufferings. He tells them therefore how they did believe, and how they shewed their value for their office as ministers of the gospel: They were not puffed up with pride, but spurred on to great diligence. *Seeing we have this ministry*, are so much distinguished and dignified, we do not take state upon ourselves, nor indulge to idleness, but are excited to the better performance of our duty. Two things in general we have an account of, viz.

(1.) Their constancy and sincerity in their work and labour. Concerning which, observe,

(1.) Their constancy and perseverance in their work is declared. *We faint not*, ver. 1. under the difficulty of our work, nor do we desist from our labour. And this their steadfastness was owing to the *mercy of God*. From the same mercy and grace that they received the *apostleship*, Rom. i.

5. they received strength to persevere in the work of that office. Note, That as it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be counted faithful, and be put into the ministry, 1 Tim. (i. 12. so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God, if we continue faithful, and persevere in our work with diligence. The best men in the world would faint in their work and under their burthen, if they did not receive mercy from God. *By the grace of God, I am what I am*, said the great apostle in his former epistles to these Corinthians, chap. xv. 10. And that mercy which hath helped us out and helped us on hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end.

(2.) Their sincerity in their work is avouched, ver. 2. in several expressions. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*. The things of dishonesty are hidden things, that will not bear the light; and those that practise them are or should be ashamed of them, especially when they are known. Such things the apostle did not allow of but did renounce and avoid with indignation. *Not walking in craftiness*, or in disguise, dealing with art and cunning, but in great simplicity and with open freedom. They had no base and wicked designs covered with fair and specious pretences of something that was good. Nor did they in their preaching *handle the word of God deceitfully*: But as he said before, they used *great plainness of speech*, and did not make their ministry to serve a turn or to truckle to base designs. They had not cheated the people with falsehood instead of truth. Some think the apostle alludeth to the deceit which treacherous gamesters use, or that of hucksters in the market, that mix bad wares with good. The apostles acted not like such persons, but they manifested the truth to every man's conscience, declaring nothing but what in their own conscience they believed to be true, and might serve for the conviction of their consciences who heard them, who were to judge for themselves, and to give an account for themselves. And this they did *as in the sight of God*, desiring thus to commend themselves unto God, and to the consciences of men, by their undisguised sincerity. Note, That a steadfast adherence to the truths of the gospel will commend ministers and people; and sincerity or uprightness will preserve a man's reputation; and the good opinion of wise and good men concerning him.

(3.) An objection is obviated, which might be thus formed: If it be thus, how then doth it come to pass, that the gospel is hid, and proveth ineffectual as to some that hear it? To which the apostle answereth, by shewing this was not the fault of the gospel, nor of the preachers thereof. But the true reasons of this were, 1. *They are lost souls*, to whom the gospel is hid, or is ineffectual, ver. 3. Christ came to save that which was lost. Matt. xviii. 11. And the gospel of Christ is sent to save such; and if that do not find and save them, they are lost for ever, they must never expect any thing else to save them, for there is no other method or means of salvation: The hiding of the gospel therefore from souls, is both an evidence and cause of their ruin. 2. *The god of this world hath blinded their eyes*, ver. 4. They are under the influence and power of the devil, who is here called the god of this world, and elsewhere the prince of this world, because of the great interest he hath in this world, and the homage that is paid to him by multitudes in the world, and in the hearts of his subjects, or rather slaves. And as he is the prince of darkness, and ruler of the darkness of this world, so he darkeneth the understandings of men, and increaseth their prejudices, and supporteth his interest by keeping them in the dark, blinding their minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. Observe, 1. Christ's design by his gospel is to make a glorious discovery of God to the minds of men: Thus as the image of God he demonstrateth the power and wisdom of God, and the grace and mercy of God for their salvation. But, 2. The design of the devil is to keep men in ignorance; and when he could not keep the light of the gospel out of the world, he maketh it his great business to keep it out of the hearts of men.

(4.) A proof of their integrity is given, ver. 5. They made it their business to preach Christ, and not themselves. *We preach not ourselves; self was not the matter nor the end of the apostles preaching*: They did not give out their own notions and private opinion, nor their passions and prejudices, for the word and will of God: Nor did they seek themselves to advance their own secular interest or glory: but they preached Christ Jesus the Lord: and thus it did become them, and behove them to do, as being Christ's servants. Their business was to make their master known to the world as the Messiah, or the Christ of God, and as (Jesus) the only Saviour of men, and as the rightful Lord, and to advance his honour and glory. Note, All the lines of Christian doctrine do center in Christ; and in preaching Christ, we preach all we should preach. As to ourselves, saith the apostle, *we preach or declare that, we are your servants for Jesus sake*. This was no compliment, but a real profession of a readiness to do good to their souls, and to promote their spiritual and eternal interest; and that for Jesus sake, not for their own sake or their own advantage, but for Christ's sake, that they might imitate his great example, and advance his glory. Note, Ministers should not be of proud spirits, *lording it over God's heritage*, who are servants to the souls of men: Yet, at the same time, they must avoid the meanness of spirit, to become the servants of the humours, or the lusts of men; if they should thus seek to please men, they would not be the servants of Christ, Gal. i. 10. And there was good reason,

1. Why they should preach Christ. For by gospel-light we have the knowledge of the glory of God, which shineth in the face of Jesus Christ, ver. 6. And the light of this sun of righteousness, is more glorious than that light which God commandeth to shine out of darkness. It is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun in the firmament: but it is more pleasant and profitable, when the gospel shineth in the heart. Note, As light was the first-born of the first creation, so it is in the new creation. The illumination of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul; the grace of God created such a light in the soul, that they who were sometimes darkness, are made light in the Lord, Ephes. v. 8.

2. Why they should not preach themselves; because they were but *earthen vessels*; things of little or no worth or value. Here seemeth to be an allusion to the lamps, which Gideon's soldiers carried in earthen pitchers. Judges vii. 16. The treasure of gospel-light and grace is put into earthen vessels, i. e. the ministers of the gospel are weak and frail creatures, and subject to like passions and infirmities as other men; they are mortal, and soon broken in pieces. And God hath so ordered it, that the weaker the vessels are, the stronger his power may appear to be, that the treasure itself should be valued the more. Note, There is an excellency of power in the gospel of Christ, to enlighten the mind, to convince the conscience, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart: But as all this power is from God the author, and not from men, who are but instruments, so that God in all things must be glorified.

8. *We are troubled on every side, yet, not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed: 10.*

Always

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11. For we which live; are always delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 15. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. 16. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18. While we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

(2.) In these verses the apostle giveth an account of their courage and patience under all their sufferings. Where observe,

(1.) How their sufferings and patience under them is declared, ver. 8—12. The apostles were great sufferers, therein they followed their Master; Christ had told them, *that in the world they should have tribulation*, and so they had; yet they met with wonderful support, great relief, and many allays of their sorrows. *We are*, saith the apostle, *troubled on every side*, afflicted many ways, and meet with almost all sorts of troubles, yet *not distressed*, ver. 8. We are not hedged in, or cooped up, because we can see help in God, and help from God, and have liberty of access to God. Again, we are *perplexed*, oftentimes uncertain, and in doubt what will become of us, and not always without anxiety in our mind on this account, yet *not in despair*, ver. 8. even in our greatest perplexities, knowing that God is able to support us, and to deliver us, and in him we always place our trust and hope. Again, we are *persecuted* by men, pursued with hatred and violence from place to place, as men not worthy to live, yet *not forsaken* of God, ver. 9. Good men may be sometimes forsaken of their friends, as well as persecuted by their enemies; but God will never leave them nor forsake them. Again, we are sometimes dejected, or *cast down*; the enemy may in great measure prevail, and our spirits begin to fail us; there may be fears within us well as fightings without, yet we are *not destroyed*, ver. 9. Still they were preserved, and kept their head above water. Note, Whatever condition the children of God may be in this world, they have all *but not* to comfort themselves with; their case sometimes is bad, yea very bad, but *not so* bad as it might be.

The apostle speaketh of their sufferings as constant, and as a counterpart of the sufferings of Christ, ver. 10. The sufferings of Christ were after a sort re-acted in the sufferings of Christians; thus did they *hear about the dying of the Lord Jesus* in their body, setting before the world the great example of a suffering Christ, *that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest*, i. e. that people might see the power of Christ's resurrection, and the efficacy of grace in and from the living Jesus, manifested in and towards them who did yet live, though they were always delivered to death, ver. 11. and though death worked in them, ver. 12. they being exposed to death, and ready to be swallowed up by death continually. Thus great were the sufferings of the apostles, that in comparison with them, other Christians were even at that time in prosperous circumstances. Death worketh in us, but *life in you*, ver. 12.

(2.) What it was that kept them from sinking and fainting under their sufferings, ver. 13—18. Whatever the burdens and troubles of good men may be, they have cause enough *not to faint*.

1. Faith kept them from fainting. *We have the same spirit of faith*, ver. 13. That faith which is of the operation of the Spirit; the same faith by which the saints of old did and suffered such great things. Note, The grace of faith is a sovereign cordial, and effectual antidote against fainting; fits in troublesome times. The Spirit of faith will go far to bear up the spirit of a man under his infirmities; and as the apostle had David's example to imitate, who said, *Psalm cxvi. 10. I have believed, and therefore have I spoken*, so he leaveth us his example to imitate: *We also believe, saith he, and therefore speak*. Note, As we receive help and encouragement from the good works and examples of others; so we should be careful to give a good example to others.

2. Hope of the resurrection kept them from sinking, ver. 14. They knew that Christ was raised, and that his resurrection was an earnest and assurance of theirs. This he had treated of largely in his former epistle to these Corinthians, chap. xv. And therefore their hope was firm, being well-grounded, that he which raised up Christ the head will also raise up all his members. Note, The hope of the resurrection will encourage us in a suffering day, and set us above the fear of death: For what reason hath a good Christian to fear death, that dieth in hope of a joyful resurrection?

3. The consideration of the glory of God and the benefit of the church, by means of their sufferings, kept them from fainting, ver. 15. Their sufferings were for the church's advantage, vide chap. i. 6. and this did redound to God's glory. For when the church is edified, then God is glorified; and we may well afford to bear sufferings patiently and cheerfully, when we see others are the better for them, if they are instructed and edified, if they are confirmed and comforted. Note, The suffering of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are intended for the good of the church and the glory of God.

4. The thoughts of the advantage their souls would reap by the sufferings of their bodies kept them from fainting. *Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day*, ver. 16. Where note, 1. We have every one of us an *outward* and *inward* man, i. e. a body and a soul. 2. If the outward man *perish* there is no remedy, it must and will be so, it was made to perish. 3. It is our happiness, if the decays of the outward man do contribute to the *renewing* of the inward man; if afflictions *outwardly* are gain to us *inwardly*; if when the body is sick and weak and perishing, the soul is vigorous and prosperous. The best of men have need of further renewing of the inward man, even *day by day*. Where the good work is begun, there is more work to be done, for the carrying it forward. And as in wicked men things grow every day worse and worse, so in godly men they grow better and better.

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2. The prospect of eternal life and happiness kept them from fainting, and was a mighty support and comfort. As to which, observe, 1. The apostle and his fellow sufferers saw their afflictions *working* towards heaven, and that there they would end at last, ver. 17. Whereupon they weighed things aright in the balance of the sanctuary; they did as it were put the heavenly glory in one scale, and their earthly sufferings in the other; and pondering things in their thought they found afflictions to be *light*, and the glory of heaven to be *a far more exceeding weight*. That which sense was ready to pronounce heavy and long, grievous and tedious; faith perceived to be *light* and short, but *for a moment*. On the other hand, the worth and weight of the crown of glory, as it is exceeding great in itself, so it is esteemed to be by the believing soul, it far exceeds all his expressions and thought; and it will be a special support in our sufferings, when we can perceive them appointed as the way, and preparing us for the enjoyment of the future glory.

(2.) Their faith enabled them to make this right judgment of things. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*, ver. 18. It is by faith we see God, who is invisible, Heb. xi. 27. and by that we look to an *unseen* heaven and hell, and faith is the evidence of things not seen. Note, 1. There are *unseen* things, as well as things that are seen. 2. There is this vast difference between them, unseen things are *eternal*, seen things but *temporal*, or temporary only. 3. It is by faith that we not only discern these things, and the great difference between them, but by that also we take our aim at unseen things, and chiefly regard them, and make it our end and scope, not to escape *present* evils, and obtain *present* good, both of which are temporal and transitory; but to escape *future* evil, and obtain *future* good things, which though *unseen* are real and certain, and eternal; and faith is the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1.

CHAP. V.

The apostle proceedeth in shewing the reasons why they did not faint under their afflictions, viz. their expectation, desire, and assurance of happiness after death, ver. 1—5. and maketh an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state, ver. 6, 7, 8. and another to quicken them in their duty, ver. 9, 10, 11. Then he maketh an apology for seeming to commend himself, and giveth a good reason for his zeal and diligence, ver. 12—15. And mentions two things that are necessary in order to our living to Christ, viz. regeneration and reconciliation, ver. 16. ad finem.

1. **F**OR we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2. For in this we groan earnestly; desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4. For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord: 7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8. We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9. ¶ Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The apostle in these verses pursueth the argument of the former chapter, concerning the grounds of their courage and patience under afflictions. And,

(1.) He mentioneth their expectation, and desire, and assurance of eternal happiness after death, ver. 1—5. Observe particularly,

1. The believer's expectation of eternal happiness after death, ver. 1. He doth not only *know*, or is well assured by faith of the truth and reality of the thing itself, that there is another and a happy life after this present life is ended; but he hath *good hope through grace* of his interest in that everlasting blessedness of the unseen world; we know we have a building of God, we have a firm and well-grounded expectation of the future felicity. Let us take notice, 1. *What* heaven is in the eye and hope of a believer; he looketh upon it as an *house*, or habitation; a dwelling-place, a resting-place, and hiding-place; our Father's house, where there are many mansions, and our everlasting home: it is an house in the heavens, in that high and holy place, which doth us far excel all the places of this earth, as the heavens are high above the earth: it is a *building of God*, whose builder and maker is God, and therefore is worthy of its author; the happiness of the future state is what God hath prepared for them that love him; it is *eternal* in the heavens, *everlasting habitations*, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay, in which our souls now dwell, that are mouldering and decaying, whose foundations are in the dust. 2. *When* it is expected this happiness shall be enjoyed, viz. immediately after death; so soon as our house of this earthly tabernacle is dissolved. Note, 1. That the body, this *earthly house*, is but a *tabernacle*, that must be dissolved shortly, the nails or pins will be drawn, and the cords be loosed, and then the body returneth to dust as it was. 2. When this comes to pass, then cometh the house *not made with hands*. The spirit returneth to God who gave it, and such as walked with God here, shall dwell with God for ever.

2. The believers earnest desire after the future blessedness, which is expressed by this word, *we groan*: which denoteth, 1. A groaning of sorrow under a heavy load; so do believers groan under the burden of life; in this, we groan earnestly, ver. 2. i. e. We that are in *this tabernacle* do groan, being burdened, ver. 4. The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers do groan, because burdened

dened with a body of sin, and the many corruptions that are still remaining and raging in them. This maketh them complain, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. vii. 24. 2. There is a groaning of desire after the happiness of another life; and thus believers do groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, ver. 2. to obtain a blessed immortality, that mortality might be swallowed up of life, ver. 4. That being found clothed we shall not be naked, ver. 3. That if it were the will of God, we might not sleep, but be changed; for it is not desirable in itself to be unclothed; death considered merely as a separation of soul and body is not to be desired, but dreaded rather; but considered as a passage to glory, the believer is willing rather to die than live, to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord, ver. 8. to leave this body, that he may go to Christ, and to put off these rags of mortality, that he may put on the robes of glory. Note, 1. Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as put an end to all our troubles here below: Naked we came into the world, and naked shall we go out of it. But, 2. Gracious souls are not found naked in the other world; no, they are clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. They shall be delivered out of all their troubles, and shall have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14.

3. The believers assurance of their interest in this future blessedness, on a double account; 1. From the experience of the grace of God, in preparing and making them meet for this blessedness. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, ver. 5. Note, All that are designed for heaven hereafter, are wrought or prepared for heaven whilst they are here; the stones of that spiritual building and temple above, are squared and fashioned here below. And he that hath wrought us for this, is God; because nothing less than a divine power can make a soul partaker of a divine nature; no hand less than the hand of God can work us for this thing: A great deal is to be done to prepare our souls for heaven, and that preparation of the heart is from the Lord. 2. The earnest of the Spirit gave them this assurance; for an earnest is part of payment, and secureth the full payment. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnest of everlasting grace and comfort.

(2.) The apostle maketh an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state and condition in this world, ver. 6, 7, 8. Where observe,

1. What their present state and condition is, they are absent from the Lord, ver. 6. They are pilgrims and strangers in this world, they do but sojourn here in their earthly home, or in this tabernacle; and though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be; we cannot see his face whilst we live. For we walk by faith, not by sight, ver. 7. i. e. We have not that vision and fruition of God, as of an object that is present with us, and as we hope for hereafter when we shall see us we are seen. Note, Faith is for this world, and sight is reserved for the other world; and it is our duty, and will be our interest, to walk by faith till we come to live by sight.

2. How comfortable and courageous we ought to be in all the troubles of life, and in the hour of death. Therefore we are, or ought to be, always confident, ver. 6. and again, ver. 8. We are confident and willing, rather to be absent from the body. True Christians, if they duly consider the prospect faith giveth them of another world, and the good reasons of their hope of blessedness after death, would be comforted under the troubles of life, and supported in the hour of death: they should take courage, when they are encountering the last enemy, and be willing rather to die than live, when it is the will of God they should put off this tabernacle. Note, As those that are born from above do long to be there; so it is but being absent from the body, and we shall very soon be present with the Lord; but to die, and be with Christ; but to close our eyes to all things in this world, and we shall open them in a world of glory; Faith will be turned into sight.

(3.) He proceedeth to make an inference to excite and quicken himself and others to duty, ver. 9, 10, 11. And so it is, that well-grounded hopes of heaven will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; but, on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the greatest care and diligence in religion; Wherefore, or because we hope to be present with the Lord, we labour and take pains, ver. 9. *οὐδὲ μωροί, ὡς οἱ πολλοί, ὅτι ἐλπίζομεν*, we are ambitious, and labour as industriously as the most ambitious men do to obtain what they aim at. Here observe,

1. What it was the apostle was thus ambitious of, and that was acceptance with God. We labour, that, living and dying, whether present in the body, or absent from the body, we may be accepted of him, i. e. the Lord, ver. 9. That we may please him who hath chosen us: That our great Lord may say to us, *Well done.* This they coveted as the greatest favour and the highest honour; it was the top of their ambition.

3. What further quickening motives they had to excite their diligence, from the consideration of the judgment to come, ver. 10, 11. And there are many things relating to this great matter, that should awe the best of men into the utmost care and diligence in religion, e. g. The certainty of this judgment, for we must appear; the universality of it, for we must all appear: the great Judge, before whose judgment-seat we must appear, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself will appear in flaming fire, the recompence to be then received, for things done in the body; which will be very particular unto every one; and very just, according to what we have done, whether good or bad. The apostle calls this awful judgment the terror of the Lord, ver. 11. And by the consideration thereof was excited to persuade men to repent, and live a holy life, that when Christ shall appear terribly, they may appear before him comfortably. And concerning his fidelity and diligence, he comfortably appealeth unto God, and the consciences of them he wrought unto: *We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience.*

12. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; 15. And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Here observe,

(1.) The apostle maketh an apology for seeming to commend himself, ver. 12. And tells them, 1. It was not to commend themselves, or for their own sakes, that he had spoken of their fidelity and diligence in the former verses; nor was he willing to suspect their good opinion of them. But, 2.

The true reason was this, to put an argument in their mouths, wherewith to answer his accusers, who made vain boastings, and gloried in appearances only; that he might give them an occasion to glory on their behalf, or to defend them against the reproaches of their adversaries. And if the people can say, the word hath been manifested to their consciences, and been effectual to their conversion and edification, this is the best defence they can make for the ministry of the word, when they are villified and reproached.

(2.) He giveth good reasons for their great zeal and diligence. Some of Paul's adversaries had, it is likely, reproached him for his zeal and fervour, as if he had been a madman, or, in the language of our days, a fanatic; they imputed all to enthusiasm, as the Roman governor told him, *Much learning hath made him mad*, Acts xxvi. 24. But the apostle tells them,

1. It was for the glory of God, and the good of the church; he was thus zealous and industrious. *Whether we be beside ourselves, or whether we be sober, i. e. whether you or others do think the one or the other, it is to God, and for his glory; and it is for your cause, or to promote your good,* ver. 13. If they manifested the greatest ardour and vehemency at some times, and used the greatest calmness in strong reasonings at other times, it was for the best ends, and in both methods they had good reason for what they did. For,

2. The love of Christ constrained them, ver. 14. They were under the sweetest and strongest constraints to do what they did. Love hath a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty. Our love to Christ will have this virtue, and Christ's love to us, which was manifested in this great instance of his dying for us, will have this effect upon us, if it be duly considered and rightly judged of. For observe, how the apostle argueth for the reasonableness of love's constraints; and declareth,

1. What we were before, and must have continued to be, had not Christ died for us. *We were dead*, ver. 14. If one died for all, then were all dead; dead in law, under sentence of death; dead in sins and trespasses, spiritually dead. Note, This was the deplorable condition of all those that Christ died for: they were lost and undone, dead and ruined, and must have remained thus miserable for ever, if Christ had not died for them.

2. What such should do, for whom Christ died; namely, that they should live to him. This is what Christ designed, that they which live, which are made alive unto God by means of his death, should live to him, that died for them, and rose again: for their sakes also, and that they should not live to themselves, ver. 15. Note, We should not make ourselves, but Christ, the end of our living and acting: and it was one end of Christ's death to cure us of this self-love, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of his love. A Christian's life should be consecrated to Christ; and then do we live as we ought to live, when we live to Christ, who died for us.

16. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. 18. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: 19. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God. 21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

In these verses the apostle mentioneth two things that are necessary in order to our living to Christ, both of which are the consequences of Christ's dying for us, viz. regeneration, and reconciliation.

First, Regeneration, which consisteth in two things, namely,

(1.) Weanedness from the world. Henceforth we know no man after the flesh, ver. 16. i. e. We do not own or affect any person or thing in this world for carnal ends and outward advantage; we are enabled by divine grace not to mind or regard this world, or the things of the world, but to live above it. The love of Christ is in our hearts, and the world is under our feet. Note, Good Christians must enjoy the comforts of this life, and their relation in this world, with a holy indifference: *Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet, saith the apostle, we know him no more.* It is questioned whether Paul had seen Christ in the flesh. However, the rest of the apostles had, and so might some among them he wrote unto. However, he would not have them value themselves upon that account; for even the bodily presence of Christ is not to be desired or doted upon by his disciples: We must live upon his spiritual presence, and the comfort of that. Note, Those that make images of Christ, and use them in their worship, do not take the way that God hath appointed for the strengthening their faith and quickening their affections; for it is the will of God we should not know Christ after the flesh.

(2.) A thorough change of the heart. For if any man be in Christ, i. e. if any man be a Christian indeed, and will approve himself such, he is, or he must be, a new creature, ver. 17. Some read it, *Let him be a new creature.* This ought to be the care of all that profess the Christian faith, that they be new creatures; not only that they have a new name, and wear a new livery, but that they have a new heart and new nature. And so great is the change the grace of God makes in the soul, that as it followeth, *old things are passed away, old thoughts, old principles, and old practices are passed away: and all these things must become new.* Note, Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul, all things are new. The renewed man acteth from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

Secondly, Reconciliation; which is here spoken of under a double notion,

(1.) As an unquestionable privilege, ver. 18, 19. Reconciliation supposeth a quarrel or breach of friendship; and sin hath made a breach, it hath broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with the sinner. Yet behold there may be a reconciliation, the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. And observe,

1. He hath appointed the mediator of reconciliation, Jesus Christ. He hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, ver. 18. God is to be owned from first to last in the undertaking and performance of the Mediator. All things relating to our reconciliation by Jesus Christ, are of God, who by the mediation of Jesus Christ, hath reconciled the world to himself, and put himself

himself into a capacity of being actually reconciled to offenders, without any wrong or injury to his justice or holiness; and doth not impute to men their *trespasses* but recedeth from the rigour of the first covenant which was broken, and doth not insist upon the advantage he might justly take against us for the breach of that covenant, but is willing to enter into a new treaty, and into a new covenant of grace, and according to the tenor thereof, freely to forgive us all our sins, and justify freely by his grace all them that do believe.

2. He hath appointed the *ministry of reconciliation*, ver. 18. By the inspiration of God the scriptures were written, which contain the *word* of reconciliation: shewing us that peace was made by the blood of the cross, that reconciliation is wrought, and directing us how we may be interested therein. And he hath appointed the *office* of the ministry, which is a *ministry of reconciliation*; i. e. ministers are to open, and proclaim to sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation, and persuade them to comply therewith. For,

(1.) Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty, ver. 20. As God is willing to be reconciled to us, we ought to be *reconciled to God*. And it is the great end and design of the gospel, that word of reconciliation, to prevail upon sinners to lay aside their enmity against God. And faithful ministers are *Christ's ambassadors*, sent to treat with sinners on peace and reconciliation. They come in *God's name* with his entreaties, and act in *Christ's stead*, doing the very thing he did when he was upon this earth, and what it is his will be done now that he is in heaven. Wonderful condescension! Though God can be no loser by the quarrel, nor gainer by the peace, yet by his ministers he doth beseech sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept of the terms he offereth, that they would be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, to all his laws, and to all his providences; to believe in the Mediator, to accept the atonement, and comply with his gospel in all the parts of it, and in the whole design of it. And for our encouragement so to do, the apostle subjoineth what should be well known and duly considered by us, ver. 20. namely, 1. The purity of the Mediator, that *he knew no sin*. 2. The sacrifice he offered, *he was made sin*: not a sinner, but *sin*, i. e. a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin. 3. The end and design of all this, that *we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, i. e. might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Note, 1. As Christ that knew no sin of his own was made sin for us, so we that have no righteousness of our own are made the righteousness of God in him. 2. Our reconciliation to God is *only* through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his merit; on him therefore we must rely, and make mention of his righteousness, and his only.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter the apostle giveth an account of his general errand to all that he preached unto; with the several arguments and methods he used, ver. 1—10. Then he doth address himself particularly to the Corinthians, giving them good cautions with great affection and strong arguments, ver. 11—18.

1. **WE** then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation). 3. Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; 4. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5. In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; 6. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned. 7. By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. 8. By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true: 9. As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

In these verses we have an account of the apostle's general errand, and exhortation to all that he preached to, and every place where he came, with the several arguments and methods he used. Observe,

(1.) The errand or exhortation itself, namely, to comply with the gospel-offers of reconciliation; that being favoured with the gospel, they would not receive this *grace of God in vain*, ver. 1. The gospel is a *word* of grace sounding in our ears, but it will be in vain for us to hear it, unless we believe it, and comply with the end and design of it. And as it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to exhort and persuade their hearers to accept of grace and mercy that is offered to them, so they are honoured with this high title of *co-workers with God*. Note, 1. They must *work*, and must *work for God*, and his glory; for *souls*, and their good; and they are *workers with God*, yet under him, as instruments only; however if they are faithful, they may hope to find God working *with them*, and their labour will be effectual. 2. Observe the language and way of the spirit of the gospel: it is not with roughness and severity, but with all mildness and gentleness, to beseech and entreat, to use exhortations and arguments, in order to prevail with sinners, and overcome their natural *unwillingness* to be reconciled to God, and to be happy for ever.

(1.) The arguments and method which the apostle used. And here he tells them,

1. The present time is the only proper season to accept of grace that is offered, and improve that grace which is afforded. *NOW is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation*, ver. 2. The gospel-day is a day of salvation, and the means of grace the means of salvation, and the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the *present* time the only *proper* time to accept of these offers. *To-day, while it is called to-day*. The *morrow* is none of ours: we know not *what* will be on the morrow, nor *where* we shall be; and we should remember that *present* seasons of grace are short and uncertain, and cannot be recalled when they are past. It is therefore our duty and interest to improve them whilst we enjoy them, and no less than our salvation depends upon our so doing.

2. What caution they used not to give offence that might hinder the success of their preaching. *Give no offence in any thing*, ver. 3. And the apostle had great difficulty to behave prudently and inoffensively towards the Jews and Gentiles, for many of both sorts watched for his halting, and sought occasion to *blame him* and his *ministry*, or his conversation; therefore he was very cautious not to *give* offence to them that were so apt to *take* offence, that he might not offend the Jews by unnecessary zeal against the law, nor the Gentiles by unnecessary compliances with such as were zealous for the law. He was careful in all his words and actions not to give offence, or occasion guilt or grief. Note, When others are too apt to *take* offence, we should be cautious lest we *give* offence; and ministers especially should be careful lest they do any thing that may bring *blame* on their ministry, or render that unsuccessful.

3. Their constant aim and endeavour in *all things to approve themselves faithful* as became the *ministers of God*, ver. 4. We see how much stress the apostle upon all occasions layeth on fidelity in our work, because much of our success doth depend upon that. His eye was single, and his heart upright in all his ministrations; and his great desire was to be the servant of God, and to approve himself so. Note, Ministers of the gospel should look upon themselves as *God's servants* or ministers, and act in every thing suitable to that character. So did the apostle,

1. *By much patience in afflictions*. He was a great sufferer, and met with many *afflictions*, oftentimes in *necessities*, and wanting the conveniences, if not the necessities of life; in *distresses*, being straitened on every side, hardly knowing what to do, in *stripes* often, chap. xi. 24. in *imprisonments*; in *tumults* raised by the Jews and Gentiles against him; in *labours*: not only in preaching the gospel, but in travelling from place to place for that end; and working with his hands to supply his necessities; in *watchings* and in *fastings*, either voluntary upon a religious account, or involuntary for the sake of religion; but he exercised *much patience* in all, ver. 4, 5. Note, 1. It is the lot of faithful ministers often to be reduced to great difficulties; and to stand in need of much patience. 2. Those that would approve themselves to God, must approve themselves faithful in trouble as well as in peace, not only in doing the work of God diligently, but also in bearing the will of God patiently.

2. *By acting from good principles*. The apostle went by a good principle in all he did, and tells them what his principles were, ver. 6, 7. viz. *Pureness*; and there is no piety without purity. A care to keep ourselves unspotted from the world is necessary in order to our acceptance with God. *Knowledge* was another principle, and zeal without this is but madness. He also acted with *long-suffering and kindness*: being not easily provoked, but bearing with the hardness of men's hearts, and hard treatment from their hands, whom he kindly endeavoured to do good unto. He acted under the influence of the *Holy Ghost*, from the noble principle of *unfeigned love*, according to the rule of the *word of truth*, under the supports and assistances of the *power of God*, having on the *armour of righteousness*, a consciousness of universal righteousness and holiness; which is the best defence against the temptations of prosperity on the right hand, and of adversity on the left.

3. By a *due temper and behaviour* under all the variety of conditions in this world, ver. 8, 9, 10. We must expect to meet with many alterations of our circumstances and conditions in this world; and it will be a great evidence of our integrity, if we preserve a right temper of mind, and duly behave ourselves under them all. The apostles met with *honour and dishonour*, good report and bad report; and good men in this world must expect to meet with some dishonour and reproaches to balance their honour and esteem; and we stand in need of the grace of God to arm us against the temptations of honour on the one hand, and to bear good report without pride; and of dishonour on the other hand, and to bear reproaches without impatience of recrimination. It should seem that persons differently represented the apostles in their reports; that *some* represented them as the *best*, and *others* as the *worst* of men: by some they were counted *deceivers*, and run down as such; by others as *true*, preaching the gospel of truth, and men that were true to the trust reposed in them. They were slighted by the men of the world as *unknown*, men of no figure nor account, not worth the taking notice of; yet in all the churches of Christ they were *well known*, and of great account; they were looked upon as *dying*, being killed all the day long, and their interest was thought to be a dying interest; and yet *behold*, saith the apostle, *we live*, and live comfortably, and bear up cheerfully under all our hardships, and go on conquering and to conquer. They were chastened, and often fell under the lash of the law; yet not killed; and though it was thought they were *fearful*, a company of mopish and melancholy men, always fighting and mourning; yet they were *always rejoicing* in God, and had the greatest reason to rejoice always. They were despised as *poor*, upon account of their poverty in this world; and yet they *made many rich*, by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. They were thought to *have nothing*, and silver and gold they had none; houses and lands they had none; yet they *possessed all things*; they had nothing in this world, but they had a treasure in heaven. Their effects lay in another country, in another world. They had nothing themselves, but possessed all things in Christ. Such a paradox is a Christian's life, and through such a variety of conditions and reports lieth our way to heaven, that we should be careful in all these things to approve ourselves to God.

11. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. 12. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. 13. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. 14. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15. And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 18. And be as a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters; saith the Lord Almighty.

The apostle proceedeth to address himself more particularly to the Corinthians, and cautions them against mingling themselves with unbelievers. Where observe;

(1.) How

(1.) How the caution is introduced with a profession in a very pathetic manner of the most tender affection to them, *even like that of a father to his children*, ver. 11, 12, 13. Though the apostle was happy in a great fluency of expressions, yet he seemed to want words how to signify the warm affections he had for these Corinthians, *q. d.* "O ye Corinthians, to whom I am now writing, I would fain convince you how well I love you: we are desirous to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of all that we preach unto, yet our mouth is open unto you, and our heart is enlarged unto you in a special manner." And because his heart was thus enlarged with love to them, therefore he opened his mouth so freely to them in kind admonitions and exhortations. *Ye are not, saith he, straitened in us; we would gladly do you all the service we can, and promote your comfort, as helpers of your faith and your joy; and if it be otherwise, the fault is in yourselves: it is because you are straitened in yourselves, and sail in suitable return to us, through some misapprehensions concerning us: and all we desire as a recompence, is only that you would be proportionably affected to us, as children should love their father.* Note, It is desirable that there should be a mutual good affection between ministers and their people, and this would greatly tend to their mutual comfort and advantage.

(2.) The caution or exhortation itself, not to mingle themselves with unbelievers, not to be unequally yoked with them, ver. 14. Either,

1. In stated relations. It is an ill thing for good people to join in affinity with the wicked and profane; these will draw different ways, and that will be galling and grievous. Those relations that are our choice must be chosen by rule; and it is good for those that are themselves the children of God, to join with those that are so likewise, for there is more danger that the bad will damage the good, than hope that the good will benefit the bad.

2. In common conversation. We should not yoke ourselves in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never choose them for our bosom friends.

3. Much less should we join in religious communion with them, we must not join with them in their idolatrous services, nor concur with them in their false worship, nor any abominations; we must not confound together the table of the Lord, and the table of devils; the house of God, and the house of Rimmon. The apostle giveth several good reasons against this corrupt mixture.

1. It is a very great absurdity, ver. 14, 15. It is an *unequal yoking* of things together that will not agree together, as had as for the Jews to have plowed with an ox and an ass, or to have sowed divers sorts of grain intermixed. What an absurdity is it to think of joining *righteousness* and *unrighteousness*, or mingling *light* and *darkness*, fire and water, together. Believers are and should be righteous, but unbelievers are unrighteous: Believers are made light in the Lord, but unbelievers are in darkness; and what comfortable communion can these have together? Christ and Belial are contrary one to the other; they have opposite interests and designs, so that it is impossible there should be any concord or agreement between them. It is absurd therefore to think of listing under both; and if the believer hath part with an infidel, he doth what in him lieth to bring Christ and Belial together.

2. It is a dishonour to the Christian's profession, ver. 16. For Christians are by profession, and should be in reality, the *temples of the living God*, i. e. dedicated to, and employed for, the service of God, who hath promised to reside in them, to dwell and walk in them, and stand in a special relation to them, and take a special care of them, that he will be their God, and they shall be his people. Now there can be no agreement between the temple of God and idols. Idols are rivals with God for his honour, and God is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another.

3. There is a great deal of danger in communicating with unbelievers and idolaters; danger of being defiled, and of being rejected; therefore the exhortation is, ver. 17. *To come out from among them, and keep at a due distance; to be separate*, as one would avoid the society of them that have the leprosy or the plague, for fear of taking infection, and not to touch the unclean thing, lest we are defiled: and who can touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? We must take care not to defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin; so is the will of God, as we ever hope to be received and not rejected by him.

4. It is a base ingratitude to God for all his favours he hath bestowed upon believers, and promised to them, ver. 18. God hath promised to be a father to them, and that they shall be his sons and his daughters: and is there a greater honour or happiness than this? How ungrateful a thing then it must be, if such who have this dignity and felicity, should degrade and debase themselves by mingling with unbelievers. *Do we thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?*

C H A P. VII.

This chapter begins with an exhortation to progressive holiness, and a due regard to the ministers of the gospel, ver. 1—4. Then the apostle returns from a long digression, to speak further of the affair concerning the incestuous person, and tells them what comfort he received in his distress about that matter upon his meeting with Titus, ver. 5, 6, 7. and how he rejoiced in their repentance, with the evidences thereof, ver. 8—11. And lastly, he concludeth with endeavouring to comfort the Corinthians, upon whom his admonitions had had so good an effect, ver. 12—16.

1. **H**AVING therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2. Receive us: we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. 3. I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. 4. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you; I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

These verses contain a double exhortation.

(1.) To make a progress in holiness, or to perfect holiness in the fear of God, ver. 1. This exhortation is given with most tender affection to them that were dearly beloved, and enforced by strong arguments, even the consideration of those exceeding great and precious promises which were mentioned in the former chapter, and which the Corinthians had an interest in and a title to. And the promises of God are strong inducements to sanctification, in both the branches thereof, namely,

1. The dying unto sins, or mortifying our lusts and corruptions: we must

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Sin is a filthiness, and there are defilements of body and mind; there are sins of the flesh, that are committed with the body; and sins of the spirit, spiritual wickedness; and we must cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of both, for God is to be glorified both with body and soul.

2. The living unto righteousness and holiness. If we hope God is our Father, we must endeavour to be partakers of his holiness; to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must be still perfecting holiness, and not be contented with sincerity, which is our gospel perfection, without aiming at sinless perfection, though we shall always come short of it whilst we are in this world; and thus we must do in the fear of God, which is the root and principle of all religion; and there is no holiness without it. Note, Faith and hope in the promises of God, must not destroy our fear of God, who taketh a pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy.

(2.) To shew a due regard to the ministers of the gospel. Receive us, ver. 2. Those that labour in the word and doctrine should be had in reputation, and be highly esteemed for their works sake: and this would be a help to making progress and holiness. If the ministers of the gospel are thought contemptible because of their office, there is danger lest the gospel itself be contemned also. The apostle did not think it any disparagement to court the favour of the Corinthians; and though we must flatter none, yet we must be gentle towards all.

He tells them,

1. He had done nothing to forfeit their esteem and good will, but was cautious not to do any thing to deserve their ill-will, ver. 2. *We have wronged no man; we have done you no harm, but always designed your good. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*, said he to the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 33. *We have corrupted no man*, by false doctrines or flattering speeches. *We have defrauded no man*; i. e. we have not sought ourselves, or to promote our own secular interests by crafty and greedy measures to the damage of any persons. This is an appeal like that of Samuel, 1 Sam. xii. Note, Then may ministers the more confidently expect esteem and favour from the people, when they can safely appeal to them that they are guilty of nothing that deserveth disesteem or displeasure.

2. He did not herein reflect upon them for want of affection to him, ver. 3, 4. So tender and cautiously did the apostle deal with the Corinthians, among whom there were some that would be glad of any occasion to reproach him, and prejudice the minds of others against him. To prevent any insinuations against him on account of what he had said, as if he intended to charge them with wronging him, or unjust accusations of him for having wronged them, he assureth them again of his great affection to them, inasmuch that he could spend his last breath at Corinth, and live and die with them, if his business with other churches, and his work as an apostle, which was not to be confined to one place only, would permit him to do so. And he addeth, it was his great affection to them that made him use such boldness or freedom of speech towards them, and cause him to glory, or make his boasts of them in all places and upon all occasions, being filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in all their tribulations.

5. For, when we are come into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. 6. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7. And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind towards me; so that I rejoiced the more. 8. For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent; for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. 9. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death: 11. For, behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

There seemeth to be a connection between chap. ii. 13. (where the apostle said he had no rest in his spirit when he found not Titus at Troas) and the fifth verse of this chapter; and so great was his affection to the Corinthians, and his concern about their behaviour in relation to the incestuous person, that in his further travels he still had no rest till he heard from them. And now he tells them,

(1.) How he was distressed, ver. 5. He was troubled when he did not meet with Titus at Troas, and afterwards when for some time he did not meet with him in Macedonia: this was a grief to him, because he could not hear what reception he met with at Corinth, or how their affairs went forward. And besides this, they met with other troubles, with incessant storms of persecutions; there were fightings without, or continual contentions with and oppositions from Jews and Gentiles; and there were fears within, and great concern for such as had embraced the Christian faith, lest they should be corrupted or seduced, and give scandal to others, or be scandalized.

(2.) How he was comforted, ver. 6, 7. Where observe, 1. The very coming of Titus was some comfort to him. It was matter of joy to see him, whom he long desired and expected to meet with. The very coming of Titus, and his company, who was dear to him as his own son in the common faith, Tit. i. 4. was a great comfort to the apostle in his travels and troubles. But, 2. The good news which Titus brought concerning the Corinthians, was matter of greater consolation. He found Titus to be comforted in them, and this filled the apostle with comfort, especially when he acquainted him with their earnest desire to give good satisfaction in the things about which the apostle had writ to them; and of their mourning for the scandal that was found among them, and the great grief they had caused to others; and their fervent mind or great affection towards the apostle, who had dealt so faithfully with them in reproving their faults. So true is the observation of Solomon, Prov. xxviii. 23. *He that rebuketh a man*

man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.

3. He ascribeth all his comfort to God as the author. It was God that comforted him by the coming of Titus, even the God of all comfort, *God that comforteth them that are cast down*, ver. 6. Note, We should look above and beyond all means and instruments unto God, as the author of all our consolation and the good that we enjoy.

(3.) How greatly he was rejoiced at their repentance, and the evidences thereof. The apostle was sorry that he had grieved them, that some pious persons among them laid to heart very greatly what he said in his former epistle, or that it was needful he should make them sorry, whom he had rather have made glad, ver. 8. But now he rejoiced when he and they had *forrowed to repentance*, ver. 9. Their sorrow in itself was now the cause of his rejoicing; but the nature of it, and the effect of it, viz. *Repentance unto salvation*, ver. 10. made him rejoice, for now it appeared that they had received damage by him in nothing, their sorrow was *but for a season*, it was turned into joy, and that joy was durable. Observe here,

1. The antecedent of true repentance is *godly sorrow*, that *worketh* repentance. It is not repentance itself, but it is a good preparation to repentance, and in some sense the *cause* that produceth repentance. The offender had great sorrow, he was in danger of being *swallowed up with evermuch sorrow*; and the society was greatly sorrowful, which before was *puffed up*; and this sorrow of theirs was after a *godly manner*, or according to God, (as it is in the original,) i. e. it was according to the will of God, and tending to the glory of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God. It was a godly sorrow, because a sorrow for sin is an offence against God, an instance of ingratitude, and a forfeiture of God's favour. There is a great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort, and the *sorrow of this world*. Godly sorrow produceth repentance and reformation, and will end in salvation; but worldly sorrow *worketh death*. The sorrows of worldly men for worldly things will bring down grey hairs the sooner to the grave; and such a sorrow even for sin as Judas had will have fatal consequences, as his had, which wrought death. Note, 1. That repentance will be attended with salvation. Therefore, 2. True penitents will never repent that they have repented, nor of any thing that was conducive thereto. 3. Humiliation and godly sorrow is previously necessary in order to repentance, and both of them are from God the giver of all grace.

2. The happy fruits and consequences of true repentance are mentioned, ver. 11. and those *fruits that are meet for repentance* are the best evidences of it; and where the heart is changed, the life and actions will be changed too. The Corinthians made it evident their sorrow was a *godly sorrow*, and such as *wrought repentance*, because it wrought in them great *carefulness* about their souls, and to avoid sin, and please God; it wrought also a *clearing of themselves*, not by insisting upon their own justification before God, especially whilst they persisted in their sins, but by endeavours to put away the accursed thing, and so free themselves from the just imputation of approving the evil that had been done. It wrought *indignation* at sin, at themselves, at the tempter and his instruments; it wrought *fear*, a fear of reverence, a fear of watchfulness, and a fear of distrust; not a distrust of God, but of themselves: an awful fear of God, a cautious fear of sin, and a jealous fear of themselves. It wrought *vehement desire*, after a thorough reformation of what had been amiss, and of reconciliation with God whom they had offended. It wrought *zeal*, a mixture of love and anger, a zeal for duty and against sin. It wrought, lastly, *revenge* against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make all due satisfaction for injuries that might be done thereby. And thus in all things had they *approved themselves to be clear in that matter*. Not that they were innocent but that they were penitent, and therefore clear of guilt before God, who would pardon and not punish them; and they ought no longer to be reproved, much less to be reproached by men for what they had truly repented of.

12. Wherefore though I wrote unto you, *I did it not* for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. 13. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. 14. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting which *I made* before Titus is found a truth. 15. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. 16. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

In these verses the apostle endeavoureth to comfort the Corinthians upon whom his admonition had had so good effect. And in order thereto,

(1.) He tells them, he had a good design in his former epistle, which might be thought severe, ver. 12. It was not chiefly for his cause that *did the wrong*, i. e. not only for his benefit, much less merely that he should be punished; nor yet was it only for his cause that *suffered wrong*, namely, the injured father, and that he might have what satisfaction could be given him; but it was also to manifest his great and sincere concern and care for them, i. e. the whole church, lest that should suffer by letting such a crime, and the scandal thereof, remain among them without due remark and reformation.

(2.) He acquaints them with the joy of Titus as well as of himself, upon the account of their repentance and good behaviour. Titus was rejoiced, and his *spirit refreshed* with their comfort, and this comforted and rejoiced the apostle also, ver. 13. and as Titus was comforted whilst he was with them, so when he remembered his reception among them, expressing their obedience to the apostolical directions, and their *fear and trembling* at the reproofs that were given them, the thoughts of these things inflamed and increased his affections to them, ver. 15. Note, There is great comfort and joy that followeth upon godly sorrow. As sin occasions general grief, so repentance and reformation occasions general joy. Paul was glad, and Titus was glad, and the Corinthians were comforted, and the penitent ought to be comforted; and well may all this joy be on earth, when there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

(3.) He concludeth this whole matter with expressing the entire confidence he had in them. *He was not ashamed of his boasting concerning them to Titus*, ver. 14. For he was not disappointed in his expectations concerning them, which he signified to Titus, and he could now with great joy declare what confidence he still had in them as to all things, that he did

not doubt of their good behaviour for the time to come. Note, It is a great comfort and joy to a faithful minister to have to do with a people that he can confide in, and that he hath reason to hope will comply with every thing he propoeth to them, that is for the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, and their advantage.

C H A P. VIII.

In this and the following chapter, Paul is exhorting and directing the Corinthians about a particular work of charity, to relieve the necessities of the poor saints at Jerusalem and in Judea, according to the good example of the churches in Macedonia, Rom. xv. 26. The Christians at Jerusalem, through war, famine, and persecution, were grown poor, many of them fallen into decay, and perhaps most of them were but poor when they first embraced Christianity, for Christ said, the poor receive the gospel. Now Paul, though he was the apostle of the Gentiles, had a tender regard and kind concern for those among the Jews that were converted to the Christian faith, and though many of them had not so much affection to the Gentile converts as they ought to have, yet the apostle would have the Gentiles to be kind to them, and stirred them up to contribute liberally for their relief. Upon this subject he is very large and copious, and writeth very affectingly. In this eighth chapter he acquainteth the Corinthians with, and commendeth, the good example of the Macedonians in this work of charity, and that Titus was sent to Corinth to collect their bounty, ver. 1—6. He then proceedeth to urge this duty with several cogent arguments, ver. 7—15. and commendeth the persons that were employed in this affair, ver. 16—24.

1. **M**OREOVER, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2. How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3. For to their power (I bear record) yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves. 4. Praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6. Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

Observe here,

(1.) The apostle taketh occasion from the good example of the churches of Macedonia, i. e. of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and others, in the region of Macedonia, to exhort the Corinthians and the Christians in Achaia, to the good work of charity. And,

First, He acquainted them with their great liberality; which he calleth the *grace of God bestowed on the churches*, ver. 1. Some think the words should be rendered the *gift of God given in or by the churches*. He certainly meaneth the charitable gifts of these churches, which are called the *graces or gifts of God*, either because they were very large, or rather because their charity to the poor saints did proceed from God as the author, and was accompanied with true love to God, which also was manifested this way. And the *grace of God* must be owned as the root and fountain of all the good that is in us, or done by us at any time; and it is great grace and favour from God, and bestowed on us, if we are made useful to others, and are forward to any good work.

Secondly, He commendeth the charity of the Macedonians, and sets it forth with good advantage. He tells them,

1. They were but in a low condition, and themselves in distress, yet they contributed to the relief of others. *They were in great tribulation and deep poverty*, ver. 2. It was a time of great affliction with them, as may be seen, Acts xvi. and xvii. The Christians in these parts met with ill treatment, which had reduced them to *deep poverty*; yet as they had *abundance of joy* in the midst of tribulation, they abounded in their liberality; they gave out a little, trusting in God to provide for them, and make it up to them.

2. They gave very largely with the *riches of liberality*, ver. 2. i. e. as liberally as if they had been rich. It was a large contribution they made, all things considered; it was according to, yea, beyond their power, ver. 3. as much, if not more, than could well be expected from them. Note, That though men may condemn the indiscretion, yet God will accept the pious zeal of those that in real works of piety and charity do rather beyond their power.

3. They were very ready and forward to this good work. *They were willing of themselves*, ver. 3. and were so far from needing that Paul should urge and press them with many arguments, that they *prayed him with much intreaty to receive the gift*, ver. 4. It seemeth that Paul was backward to undertake this trust, for he would give himself to the word and prayer; or, it may be, he was apprehensive how ready his enemies would be to reproach and blacken him upon all occasions, and might take a handle against him upon account of so large a sum deposited in his hands, to suspect or accuse him of indiscretion and partiality in the distribution, if not of some injustice. Note, How cautious ministers should be, especially in money matters, not to give occasion to them that seek occasion to speak reproachfully.

4. Their charity was founded in true piety, and this was the great commendation of it: they performed this good work in a right method; *first they gave themselves unto the Lord, and then they gave unto us* their contributions, *by the will of God*, ver. 5. i. e. according as it was the will of God they should do, or to be disposed of as the will of God should be, and for his glory. This it seemeth exceeded the expectation of the apostle, it was more than he hoped for, to see such warm and pious affections shining in these Macedonians, and this good work performed with so much devotion and solemnity. They solemnly, jointly, and unanimously made a fresh surrender of themselves and all they had unto the Lord Jesus Christ. They had done this before, and now they do it again upon this occasion; sanctifying their contributions to do God's honour, by first giving themselves to the Lord. Note, 1. We should give ourselves to God. We cannot bestow ourselves better. 2. When we give ourselves to the Lord, we then give him all we have, to be called for and disposed of according to his will. 3. Whatever we use or lay out for God, it is only giving to him what is his own. 4. All we give or bestow for charitable uses will

not be accepted of God, or turn to our advantage, unless we first give ourselves to the Lord.

(2.) The apostle tells them Titus was desired to go and make a collection among them, *ver. 6.* and Titus, he knew, would be an acceptable person to them. He had met with a kind reception among them formerly; they had shewn good affection to him, and he had a great love for them: Besides, Titus had already begun this work among them, therefore he was desired to finish it. So that he was on all accounts a proper person to be employed; and when so good a work had already prospered in so good a hand, it would be a pity it should not proceed and be finished. Note, It is an instance of wisdom, to use proper instruments in a work we desire to do well; and the work of charity will often succeed the best, when the most proper persons are employed to ask for it, and dispose of it.

7. Therefore as ye abound in every thing in faith: and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us; see that ye abound in this grace also. 8. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. 10. And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. 12. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. 13. For I mean not that other men be eased and ye burdened: 14. But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality; 15. As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little, had no lack.

In these verses the apostle useth several cogent arguments to stir up the Corinthians to this good work of charity.

(1.) He urgeth upon them the consideration of their eminence, in other gifts and graces, and would have them excel in this of charity also, *ver. 7.* There is a great address and holy art here used by the apostle, when he would persuade the Corinthians to this good thing. He commendeth them for other good things that were found in them. Most people love to be spoken fair, especially when we ask a gift of them for ourselves or others; and it is a justice we owe to those in whom God's grace doth shine, to give them their due commendation. Observe here what it was the Corinthians abounded in: Faith is mentioned first, for that is the root; and as without faith it is impossible to please God, *Heb. xi. 6.* so they that do abound in faith, will abound in other graces and good works also; and this will work and shew itself by love. To their faith was added utterance, which is an excellent gift, and redounds much to the glory of God, and the good of the church. Many have faith that want utterance. But these Corinthians excelled most churches in spiritual gifts, and particularly in utterance: and yet this was not in them, as in too many, both the effect and evidence of ignorance: For with their utterance there appeared knowledge, abundance of knowledge. They had a treasury of things new and old, and in their utterance they brought out of this treasury. They abounded also in all diligence. Oftentimes those who have great knowledge and ready utterance, are not the most diligent Christians. Great talkers are not always the best doers; but these Corinthians were diligent to do, as well as know and talk well. And further, they had abundant love to their ministers; and were not like too many, that having gifts of their own, are but too apt to slight their ministers and neglect them. Now to all these good things, the apostle desireth them to add this grace also, to abound in charity to the poor; that where so much good was found, there should be found yet more good.

Before the apostle proceedeth to another argument, he taketh care to prevent any misapprehensions of his design to impose on them, or to bind heavy burdens upon them by his authority; and tells them, *ver. 8.* he did not speak by commandment, or in a way of authority, I give my advice, *ver. 10.* He took occasion from the forwardness of others, to propose what would be expedient for them, and would prove the sincerity of their love, or be the genuine effect and evidence thereof. Note, A great difference should be made between plain and positive duty, and the improvement of a present opportunity of doing or getting good. Many a thing which is good for us to do, yet cannot be said to be by express and indispensable commandment our duty, at this or that time.

(2.) Another argument is taken from the consideration of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the best argument for Christian duties, are those that are taken from the love of Christ that constraineth us. The example of the churches of Macedonia was such as the Corinthians should imitate: But the example of our Lord Jesus Christ should have much greater influence. And ye know, saith the apostle, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *ver. 8.* that though he was rich, as being God, equal in power and glory with the Father, rich in all the glory and blessedness of the upper world, yet for your sakes he became poor; not only did he become man for us, but he became poor also. He was born in poor circumstances, lived a poor life, and died in poverty; and this was for our sakes, that we thereby might be made rich; rich in the love and favour of God; rich in the blessings and promises of the new covenant; rich in the hopes of eternal life, being heirs of the kingdom. This is a good reason why we should be charitable to the poor out of what we have, because we ourselves live upon the charity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3.) Another argument is taken from their good purposes, and their forwardness to begin this good work. As to this he telleth them,

1. It was expedient for them to perform what they purposed, and finish what they had begun, *ver. 10, 11.* What else did their good purposes and good beginnings signify? Good purposes are good things; they are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to behold, and give hopes of good fruit, but they are lost and signify nothing without performances. So good beginnings are amiable, but we shall lose the benefit unless there be perseverance, and we bring forth fruit to perfection. Seeing therefore the Corinthians but shewed a readiness to will, he would have them be careful also in the performance, according to their ability. For,

2. This would be acceptable to God. *This willing mind is accepted, ver. 12.* when accompanied with sincere endeavours. When men do purpose that which is good, and endeavour according to their ability to perform also, God will accept of what they have, or can do, and not reject them for what they have not, and is not in their power to do; and this is true as to other things, besides the work of charity. But let us note here, this scripture will by no means justify those that think good meanings are enough, or that good purposes and the professions of a willing mind is sufficient to save them. It is accepted indeed where there is a performance, as far as we are able, and when providence doth hinder the performance as in David's case concerning building a house for the Lord, *2 Sam. vii.*

(4.) Another argument is taken from the discrimination which divine providence doth make in the distribution of the things of this world, and the mutability of human affairs, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* The force of the arguing seemeth to be this: Providence giveth to some more of the good things of this world, and to some less, and that with this design, that those who have a greater abundance might supply them that are in want, that there might be room for charity. And further, considering the mutability of human affairs, and how soon there may be an alteration, so that those who now have an abundance, may stand in need of being supplied themselves in their wants; this should induce them to be charitable whilst they are able.

It is the will of God by our mutual supplying one another, there should be some sort of equality; not an absolute equality; indeed, or such a levelling as would destroy property, for in such a case there would be no exercise of charity. But as in works of charity there should be an equitable proportion observed, that the burden should not lie too heavy on some, while others are wholly eased; so all should think themselves concerned to supply them that are in want. This is illustrated by the instance of gathering and distributing manna in the wilderness, concerning which as may be read, *Exod. xvi.* it was the duty of every family and all in the family, to gather what they could, which, when it was gathered, was put into some common receptacle for each family, from whence the master of the family distributed to every one as he had occasion; to some more than they were able, through age and infirmity to gather up; and to others less than they gathered, because they did not need so much; and thus he that had gathered much (i. e. more than he had occasion for) had nothing over, when a communication was made to him that he had gathered little, who by this method had no lack. Note, Such is the condition of men in this world, that we mutually depend on one another, and should help one another; and those who have never so much of this world, have no more than food and raiment; and they who have but a little of this world, seldom want that; nor indeed should those who have abundance suffer others to want, but be ready to afford supply.

16. But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17. For indeed he accepted the exhortation, but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches: 19. (And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind.) 20. Avoiding this that no man should blame us in this abundance, which is administered by us; 21. Providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22. And we have sent with them our brother, whom ye have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. 23. Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner, and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ. 24. Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

In these verses the apostle commendeth the brethren that were sent to them to collect their charity, and as it were, giveth them letters credential, that if they were inquired after, *ver. 23.* i. e. if any should be inquisitive or suspicious concerning them, it might be known who they were, and how safely they might be trusted.

1. He commendeth Titus, 1. For his earnest care and great concern of heart for them, and desire in all things to promote their welfare. This is mentioned with thankfulness to God, *ver. 16.* and it is cause of thankfulness if God hath put into the hearts of any to do us or others any good. 2. For his readiness to this present service. He accepted of the office, and was forward to go upon this good errand, *ver. 17.* Asking of charity for the relief of others, is by many looked upon as a thankless office, yet it is a good office, and what we should not be shy of when we are called to it.

3. He commendeth another brother, who was sent with Titus. It is generally thought this was Luke. He is commended, 1. As a man whose praise was in the gospel through all the churches, *ver. 18.* His ministerial services of several kinds were well known, and he had approved himself praise-worthy in what he had done. 2. As one chosen of the churches, *ver. 19.* and joined with the apostle in his ministration. This was done, it is most likely, at the motion and request of Paul himself, for this reason, that no man might blame him in that abundance which was administered by him, *ver. 20.* So cautious was the apostle to avoid all occasions that evil-minded men might lay hold on to blacken him. He would not give occasion to any to accuse him of injustice or partiality in this affair; and thought it to be his duty as it is the duty of all Christians, to provide for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men; i. e. to act so prudently as to prevent as far as we can, all unjust suspicions concerning us, and all occasions of scandalous imputations. Note, We live in a censorious world, and should cut off occasion from them that seek occasion to speak reproachfully. It is the crime of others, if they reproach or censure us without occasion; and it is our imprudence at least, if we give them any occasion, when there may be not a just cause for them so to do.

3. He commendeth also another brother that was joined with the two former in this affair. This brother is thought to be Apollos. Whoever he was, he had approved himself diligent in many things; and therefore was fit to be employed in this affair. Moreover he had a great desire to this work, because of the confidence, or good opinion he had of the Corinthians, *ver. 22.* and it is a great comfort to see those employed in good works, that have formerly approved themselves diligent.

4. He

4. He concludeth this point with a general good character of them all, ver. 23. as *fellow-labourers with him* for their welfare; as the *messengers of the churches*, as the *glory of Christ*, i. e. who were sent to him for a name and a praise, which brought glory to Christ as instruments, and had obtained honour from Christ to be counted faithful and employed in his service.

Wherefore upon the whole he exhorteth them to shew their liberality, answerable to the great expectation others had concerning them at this time: that these messengers of the churches, and the churches themselves, might see a full *proof of their love* to God, and to their afflicted brethren, and that it was with good reason the apostle had even *boasted on their behalf*, ver. 24. Note, That others good opinion of us should be an argument with us to do well.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter the apostle seemeth to excuse his earnestness in pressing the Corinthians to the duty of charity, ver. 1—5. And proceedeth to give directions about the acceptable way and manner of performing it, viz. bountifully, deliberately, and freely; and giveth good encouragement for so doing, ver. 6. to the end.

1. **F**OR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2. For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that as I said ye may be ready: 4. Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

In these verses the apostle speaketh very respectfully to the Corinthians, and with great skill; and while he seemeth to excuse his urging them so earnestly to charity, doth still press them thereto, and sheweth how much his heart was set upon this matter.

(1.) He tells them it was needless to press them with further arguments to afford relief to their poor brethren, ver. 1. being satisfied he had said enough already to prevail with them, of whom he had so good an opinion. For, 1. *He knew their forwardness* to every good work, and how they had begun this good work a year ago. Inasmuch, that, 2. He had boasted of their zeal to the Macedonians, and this had provoked many of them to do as they had done. Wherefore he was persuaded, that as they had begun well, they would go on well; and so commending them for what they had done, he lays an obligation on them to proceed and persevere.

(2.) He seemeth to apologise for sending Titus and the other brethren to them. He is unwilling they should be offended at him for this, as if he was too earnest, and pressed too hard upon them, and tells the true reasons why he sent them, namely,

1. That having this timely notice, they might be fully ready, ver. 3. and not surprised with hasty demands when he should come to them: and when we would have others to do that which is good, we must act towards them prudently and tenderly and give them time.

2. That he might not be ashamed of his boasting concerning them, if they should be found unready, ver. 3. 4. He intimated that some from Macedonia might haply come with him: and if the collection should not then be made, this would make him, not to say them, ashamed, considering the boasting of the apostle concerning them. Thus careful was he to preserve their reputation and his own. Note, Christians should consult the reputation of their profession, and endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

6. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9. (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) 11. Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13. Whiles by the experiment of this administration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; 14. And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Here we have,

First, Proper directions to be observed about the right and acceptable manner of bestowing charity: and it is of great concernment, that we do what is required, so as is commanded. Now, as to the manner in which the apostle would have the Corinthians give, observe,

(1.) It should be *bountifully*; this was intimated, ver. 5. that a liberal contribution was expected, a matter of *bounty*; not what favoured of covetousness; and he offereth to their consideration that men who expect a good

return at harvest, do not use to pinch and spare in sowing their seed, for the return is usually proportionable to what they sow, ver. 6.

2. It should be *deliberately*. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, ver. 7. Works of charity, like other good works, should be done with thought and design, whereas some do good only by accident; they comply, it may be hastily, with the importunity of others, without any good design, and give more than they intended, and then repent of it afterwards, or possibly, had they duly considered all things they would have given more. Due deliberation, as to this matter of our own circumstances, and those of them we are about to relieve, will be very helpful to direct us how liberal we should be in our contributions for charitable uses.

(3.) It should be *freely*, whatever we give, be it more or less: not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully, ver. 7. Persons sometimes will give merely to satisfy the importunity of those that ask their charity, and what they give is in a manner squeezed or forced from them, and this unwillingness spoileth all they do. We ought to give more freely than the modesty of some necessitous persons will allow them to ask: we should not only deal out bread, but draw out our souls to the hungry, Isa. lviii. 10. We should give liberally, with an open hand, and cheerfully with an open countenance: being glad we have ability, and an opportunity to be charitable.

Secondly, Good encouragement to perform this work of charity in the manner thus directed to, e. g. Here the apostle tells the Corinthians,

(1.) They themselves would be no losers by what they gave in charity. This may serve to obviate a secret objection in the minds of many against this good work, who are ready to think they may want what they give away: but such should consider what is given to the poor in a right manner is far from being lost; as the precious seed which is cast into the ground is not lost, though it is buried there for a time: for it will spring up and bear fruit; the sower shall receive it again with increase, ver. 6. Such good returns may they expect that give freely and liberally in charity. For,

1. God loveth a cheerful giver, ver. 7. and what may they not hope to receive, who are the objects of the divine love? Can a man be a loser, by doing that with which God is pleased? May not such a one be sure he shall some way or other be a gainer? Nay, is not the love and favour of God better than all other things, better than life itself?

2. God is able to make our charity redound to our advantage, ver. 8. We have no reason to distrust the goodness of God, and to be sure we have no reason to question his power; he is able to make all grace abound toward us, and to abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can make us to have a sufficiency in all things; to be content with what we have: to make up what we give; to make us able to give yet more; as it is written, Psalm cxii. 9. concerning the charitable man, *He hath dispersed abroad: he hath given to the poor: his righteousness, i. e. his almsgiving, endureth for ever.* The honour of it is lasting, the reward of it eternal, and he is still able to live comfortably himself, and to give liberally to others.

3. The apostle puts up a prayer to God in their behalf, that they might be gainers and not losers, ver. 10, 11. Where observe, 1. *To whom the prayer is made*, viz. unto God, who ministereth the seed to the sower, i. e. who by his providence giveth such an increase to the fruits of the earth, that we have not only bread sufficient to eat for one year, but enough to sow again for a future supply; or thus, it is God that giveth us not only a competency for ourselves, but also wherewith we may supply the want of others, and so should be as seed to be sown. 2. *For what he prayeth*, and there are several things he desireth for them, viz. that they may have bread for their food, i. e. always a good competency for themselves, food convenient; that God would multiply their seed sown, i. e. that they might still be able to do more good; and that there might be an increase of the fruits of righteousness, i. e. that they might reap plentifully, and have the best and most ample returns of their charity; so as to be enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, ver. 11. that upon the whole they may find it true they shall be no losers, but great gainers. Note, Works of charity are so far from impoverishing us, that they are proper means truly to enrich us, or make us truly rich.

(2.) The poor distressed saints, which would be gainers, and they would be no losers: for this service would supply their wants, ver. 12. If we have reason to think them to be saints, whom we believe to be of the household of faith, whose wants are great; how ready should we be to do them good. Our goodness cannot extend unto God, but we should freely extend it to those excellent ones of the earth, and thus shew that we delight in them.

(3.) This would redound to the praise and glory of God. Many thanksgivings would be given to God on this account: by the apostle, and by them that were employed in this ministration, ver. 11. These would bless God, who made them happy instruments in so good a work, and made them successful in it, besides these, others also would be thankful, the poor that were supplied in their wants, would not fail to be very thankful to God, and bless God for them; and all that wished well to the gospel would glorify God for this experiment, or proof of subjection to the gospel of Christ, and true love to all men, ver. 11. Note, 1. True Christianity is a subjection to the gospel, a yielding ourselves to the commanding influence of its truths and laws.

2. We must evidence the sincerity of our subjection to the gospel by works of charity.

3. This will be for the credit of our profession, and to the praise and glory of God.

4. Those whose wants were supplied would make the best returns they were able, by sending up many prayers to God for those who had relieved them, ver. 14. And thus should we recompence the kindnesses we receive when we are not in a capacity of recompencing them any other way; and as this is the only recompence the poor can make, so it is many times greatly for the advantage of the rich.

Lastly, The apostle concludeth this whole matter with this doxology, *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift*, ver. 15. Some think by this unspeakable gift he meaneth the gift of grace bestowed on the churches, in making them able and willing to supply the necessities of the saints, which would be attended with unspeakable benefit both to the givers and receivers. It should seem rather, that he meaneth Jesus Christ, who is indeed the unspeakable gift of God unto this world: a gift we have all reason to be very thankful for.

C H A P. X.

There was no place in which the apostle Paul met with more opposition from false apostles than at Corinth; he had many enemies there: Let not any of the ministers of Christ think it strange, if they meet with perils not only from enemies, but from false brethren, for blessed Paul himself did so. Though he was so blameless and inoffensive in all his carriage, so condescending and useful to all, yet there were those that bore him ill-will, that envied him, and did all they could to undermine him, and lessen his interest and reputation. Therefore he vindicateth himself

himself from their imputations, and armeth the Corinthians against their insinuations. In this chapter the apostle, in a mild and humble manner, asserteth the power of his preaching, and to punish offenders, ver. 1-6. He then proceedeth to reason the case with the Corinthians, asserting his relation to Christ, and his authority as an apostle of Christ, ver. 7-11. And refuseth to justify himself, or to act by such rules as the false teachers did, but according to the better rules he had fixed for himself, ver. 12. to the end.

1. **N**OW I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you; 2. But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present, with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: 6. And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Here we may observe,

(1.) The mild and humble manner in which the blessed apostle addresseth the Corinthians, and how desirous he is that no occasion might be given him to use severity.

1. He addresseth himself in a very mild and humble manner: *I Paul myself beseech you*, ver. 1. We find in the introduction to this epistle, he joined Timothy with himself, but now he speaketh only for himself, against whom the false apostles had particularly levelled their reproaches: yet in the midst of the greatest provocations he shewed humility and mildness, from the consideration of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and desireth this great example might have the same influence on the Corinthians. Note, When we find ourselves tempted or inclined to be rough and severe towards any body, we should think on the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that appeared in him in the days of his flesh, in the design of his undertaking, and in all the acts of his grace towards poor souls. How humbly also doth this great apostle speak of himself, as *one in presence base among them*! So his enemies spake of him with contempt, and this he seemeth to acknowledge: whilst others thought meanly, and spake scornfully of him; he had low thoughts of himself, and spake humbly of himself. Note, We should be sensible of our own infirmities, and think humbly of ourselves, even when men reproach us for them.

2. He is desirous that no occasion might be given to use severity, ver. 2. *He beseecheth them* to give no occasion for him to be bold, or to exercise his authority against them in general, as he had resolved to do against some, that unjustly charged him as *walking according to the flesh*, i. e. of regulating his conduct even in his ministerial actions according to carnal policy, or with worldly views: This was what the apostle had renounced, and this is contrary to the spirit and design of the gospel, and was far from being the aim and design of the apostle. Hereupon,

(2.) He asserteth the power of his preaching, and to punish offenders.

1. The power of his preaching, ver. 3, 4, 5. Where observe, (1.) The work of the ministry is a warfare, not after the flesh indeed, for it is a spiritual warfare with spiritual enemies, and for spiritual purposes. And though ministers do walk in the flesh, or live in the body, and in the common affair of life do act as other men, yet in their work and warfare they must not go by the maxims of the flesh, nor should they design to please the flesh. That must be crucified with its affections and lusts: It must be mortified and kept under. (2.) The doctrines of the gospel and discipline of the church are the weapons of this warfare; and these are not carnal: Outward force therefore is not the method of the gospel, but strong persuasions by the power of truth, and the meekness of wisdom. A good argument this is against persecution for conscience sake; conscience is accountable to God only, and people must be persuaded to God and their duty, not driven by force of arms. And so the weapons of our warfare are mighty, or very powerful; the evidence of truth is convincing and cogent; this indeed is through God, or owing unto him, because they are his institutions, and accompanied with his blessing, which maketh all opposition to fall before his victorious gospel. Where we may observe, 1. What opposition is made against the gospel, by the powers of sin and Satan in the hearts of men: ignorance, prejudices, beloved lusts, are Satan's strong-holds in the souls of some: vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and high thoughts or proud conceits, in others do exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, i. e. by these ways the devil endeavours to keep men from faith and obedience to the gospel, and secureth his possession of the hearts of men, as his own house and property. But then observe, 2. The conquest which the word of God doth gain. These strong-holds are pulled down by the gospel as the means, through the grace and power of God accompanying it as the principal efficient cause. Note, The conversion of the soul is the conquest of Satan in that soul.

2. The apostle's power to punish offenders (and that in an extraordinary manner) is asserted in ver. 6. The apostle was a prime minister in the kingdom of Christ, and chief officer in his army, and had in readiness, i. e. he had power and authority at hand, to revenge all disobedience, i. e. to punish offenders in the most exemplary and extraordinary manner. The apostle speaketh not of personal revenge, but of punishing disobedience to the gospel, and disorderly walking among church-members, by inflicting church-censures. Note, Though the apostle shewed meekness and gentleness, yet he would not betray his authority; and therefore intimateth, that when he would commend them whose obedience was fulfilled or manifested, others would fall under severe censures.

7. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. 8. For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: 9. That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10. For

his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. 11. Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

In these verses the apostle proceedeth to reason the case with the Corinthians, in opposition to those who despised him, judged him, and spake hardly of him. Do ye, (saith he) look on things after the outward appearance? ver. 7. Is this a fit measure or rule to make an estimate of things or persons by, and to judge between me and my adversaries? In outward appearance, Paul was mean and despicable with some: he did not make a figure as perhaps some of his competitors might do; but this was a false rule to make a judgment by. It should seem, that some boasted mighty things of themselves, and made a fair shew, but there are false appearances many times: a man may seem to be learned, but hath not learned Christ, and appear virtuous, that hath not a principle of grace in his heart. However the apostle asserteth two things of himself.

(1.) His relation to Christ. If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's, ver. 7. It should seem by this, that Paul's adversaries boasted of their relation to Christ, as his ministers and servants. Now the apostle reasoneth thus with the Corinthians: Suppose it to be so, allowing what they say to be true, (and let us observe that in fair arguing we should allow all that may be reasonably granted: and should not think it impossible, but those who differ from us very much may yet belong to Christ, as well as we) allowing them, might the apostle say, what they boast of, yet they ought also to allow this to us, that we also are Christ's. Note, 1. We must not by the most charitable allowances we make to others, that differ from us, cut ourselves off from Christ, or deny our relation to him. For, 2. There is room in Christ for many, and those that differ much from one another may yet be one in him. And it would help to heal the differences that are among Christians, if they would remember that how confident soever we may be that belong to Christ, yet at the same time we must allow, that they who differ from us may belong to Christ too, and therefore should be treated accordingly. We must not think we are the people, and that none belong to Christ but we. This we may plead for ourselves against those that judge us and despise us, that how weak soever we are, yet as they are Christ's, so are we: we profess the same faith, we walk by the same rule, we build upon the same foundation, and hope for the same inheritance.

(2.) His authority from Christ as an apostle. This he had mentioned before, ver. 6. and now he tells them, he might speak of it again, and that with some sort of boasting, seeing it was a truth, that the Lord hath given it to him, and it was more than his adversaries could justly pretend to. It was, to be sure, what he should not be ashamed of, ver. 8. Concerning which observe,

1. The nature of his authority: it was for edification, and not for destruction. This indeed is the end of all authority, civil and ecclesiastical; and was the end of that extraordinary authority which the apostles had, and of all church-discipline.

2. The caution with which he speaketh of his authority, professing his design was not to terrify them with big words, nor by angry letters, ver. 9. Thus he seemeth to obviate an objection that might have been formed against him, ver. 10. But the apostle declared, he did not intend to frighten them that were obedient, nor did he write any thing in his letters, that he was not able to make good by deeds against the disobedient: and he would have his adversaries know this, ver. 11. that he would, by the exercise of his apostolical power committed to him, make it appear to have a real efficacy.

12. For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves; and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 13. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. 14. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ. 15. Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours: but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly. 16. To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things, made ready to our hand. 17. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 18. For not he that commendeth himself, is approved but whom the Lord commendeth.

In these verses observe,

(1.) The apostle refuseth to justify himself, or to act by rules as the false apostles did, ver. 12. He plainly intimateth they took a wrong method to commend themselves, in measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, which was not wise. They were pleased, and did pride themselves in their own attainments, and never considered those that far exceeded them in gifts and graces, in power and authority: and this made them haughty and insolent. Note, If we would compare ourselves with others that do excel us, this would be a good method to keep us humble; we should be pleased and thankful for what we have of gifts or graces, but never pride ourselves therein, as if there were none to be compared with us, or that do excel us. The apostle would not be of the number of such vain men; let us resolve we will not make ourselves of that number.

(2.) He fixeth a better rule for his conduct; namely, not to boast of things, without his measure, which was the measure God had distributed to him, ver. 12. His meaning is, either that he would not boast of more gifts or graces, or power and authority, than God had really bestowed on him; or rather, that he would not act beyond his commission as to persons or things, nor go beyond the line prescribed to him; which he plainly intimateth the false apostles did, while they boasted of other men's labours. The apostle's resolution was to keep within his own province, and that compass of ground which God had marked out for him. His commission as an apostle was to preach the gospel every where, especially among the Gentiles, and he was not confined to one place; yet he observed the directions of providence, and the

the Holy Spirit, as to the particular places whither he went or where he did abide.

(3.) He acted according to this rule. We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, ver. 14. And particularly, he acted according to this rule in preaching at Corinth, and in the exercise of his apostolical authority there. For he came thither by divine direction, and there he converted many to Christianity: and therefore in *boasting* of them as his charge, he acted not contrary to his rule, he boasted not of *other men's labours*, ver. 15.

(4.) He declareth his success in observing this rule. His hope was, that their faith was increased, and that others beyond them, even to the remoter parts of Achaia, would embrace the gospel also; and in all this he exceeded not his commission, nor acted in *another man's line*.

(5.) He seemeth to check himself in this matter, as if he had spoken too much in his own praise. The unjust accusations and reflections of his enemies had made it needful he should justify himself; and the wrong methods they took, gave him good occasion to mention the better rule he had observed: yet he is afraid of boasting or taking any praise to himself, and therefore he mentioneth two things which ought to be regarded, *viz.* 1. That he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord, ver. 17. If we are able to fix good rules for our conduct, or act by them, or have any good success in so doing: the praise and glory of all is owing unto God. Ministers in particular must be careful not to glory in their performance, but must give God the glory of their work, and the success thereof.

2. That not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth, ver. 18. Of all flattery, self-flattery is the worst, and self-applause is seldom any better than self-flattery and self-deceit; at the best, self-commendation is no praise, it is oftentimes as foolish and vain as it is proud: Therefore instead of praising or commending ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God, and his approbation will be our best commendation.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter the apostle goes on with his own discourse, in opposition to the false apostles that were very industrious to lessen his interest and reputation among the Corinthians, and had prevailed too much by their insinuations. First, he apologizeth for his going about to commend himself, and giveth the reason for what he did, ver. 1—4. Afterwards he mentioneth, in his own necessary vindication, his equality with the other apostles, and with the false apostles in this particular, of preaching the gospel to the Corinthians freely without wages, ver. 5—15. Then he maketh another preface to what he was about further to say in his own justification, ver. 16—21. And afterwards giveth a large account of his qualifications, labours and sufferings, in which he exceeded the false apostles, ver. 22, to the end.

1. **WOULD** to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. 2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4. For if he that cometh preached another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Here we may observe,

(1.) The apology the apostle maketh for going about to commend himself: He is loth to enter upon this subject of self-commendation. *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly*, ver. 1. He callth this *folly*, because too often it is really no better; in this case it was necessary; yet seeing others might apprehend it to be folly in him, he desireth them to bear with it. Note, As much against the grain as it is with a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much it is against the grain with an humble man to speak in his own praise. It is no pleasure to a good man to speak well of himself, yet in some cases it is lawful, *viz.* when it is for the advantage of others, or for our own necessary vindication; as thus it was here. For,

(2.) We have the reasons for what the apostle did: namely,

1. To preserve the Corinthians from being corrupted by the insinuations of the false apostles, ver. 2, 3. He tells them, *He was jealous over them with godly jealousy*, i. e. he was afraid lest their faith should be weakened, by hearkening to such suggestions as tended to lessen their regard to his ministry by which they were brought to the Christian faith. He had espoused them to one husband, i. e. converted them to Christianity; (and the conversion of a soul is its marriage to the Lord Jesus) and he was desirous to present them as a chaste virgin, i. e. pure and spotless and faithful, not having their minds corrupted with false doctrines by false teachers; so as *Eve was beguiled by the subtilty of the serpent*. This godly jealousy in the apostle was a mixture of love and fear; and faithful ministers cannot but be afraid and concerned for their people, lest they should lose that which they have received, and turn from what they have embraced, especially when deceivers are gone abroad, or have crept in among them.

2. To vindicate himself against the false apostles; so far as they could not pretend they had another Jesus, or another Spirit, or another gospel to preach to them, ver. 4. If this had been the case, there would have been some colour of reason to bear with them, or to hearken to them: But seeing there is but one Jesus, one Spirit, and one gospel, that is, or at least that ought to be preached to them, and received by them; what reason could there be why the Corinthians should be prejudiced against him who first converted them to the faith, by the artifices of any adversary? It was a just occasion of jealousy, that such persons designed to preach another Jesus, another Spirit, and another gospel.

5. For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. 7. Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? 8. I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. 9. And when I was

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present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burthen some unto you, and so will I keep myself. 10. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. 12. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. 13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

After the foregoing preface to what he was about to say, the apostle in these verses mentioneth,

(1.) His equality with the other apostles, that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, ver. 5. This he expresseth very modestly, *I suppose so*, and he might have spoken very positively. The apostleship as an office was equal in all the apostles; but the apostles, like other Christians, did differ one from another: These stars differed from one another in glory, and Paul was indeed of the first magnitude; yet he speaketh modestly of himself, and humbly owneth his personal infirmity, that he was *rude in speech*, i. e. he had not such a graceful delivery as some others might have. Some think that he was a man of very low stature, and his voice was awfully small; others think he might have had some impediment in his speech, perhaps a stammering tongue. However he was not rude in knowledge, he was not unacquainted with the best rules of oratory and art of persuasion, much less was he ignorant of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as had been thoroughly manifested among them.

(2.) His equality with the false apostles in this particular, the preaching the gospel unto them freely without wages. This the apostle largely insisteth on, and sheweth that as they could not but own him to be a minister of Christ, so they ought to acknowledge he had been a good friend to them. For,

1. He had preached the gospel to them freely, ver. 7—10. He had proved at large in his former epistle to them, the lawfulness of ministers receiving maintenance from the people, and the duty of the people to give them an honourable maintenance; and here he saith, he himself had taken wages of other churches, ver. 8. so that he had a right to have asked and received from them: Yet he waved his right, and chose rather to abuse himself by working with his hands in the trade of tent-making to maintain himself, than be burthen some to them, that they might be exalted or encouraged to receive the gospel, which they had so cheap; yea, he chose rather to be supplied from Macedonia, than to be chargeable unto them.

2. He informeth them of the reason of this his conduct among them. And negatively, it was not because he did not love them, ver. 11. or was unwilling to receive tokens of their love. For love and friendship are manifested by mutual giving and receiving. But positively, it was to avoid offence, that he might cut off occasion from them that desired occasion. He would not give occasion for any to accuse him of worldly designs in preaching the gospel, or that he intended to make a trade of it to enrich himself; and that others who opposed him at Corinth might not in this respect gain an advantage against him: That wherein they gloried, as to this matter, they might be found even as he, ver. 12. It is not improbable to suppose, that the chief of the false teachers at Corinth, or some among them were rich, and taught (or deceived) the people freely, and might accuse the apostle or his fellow-labourers as mercenary men, that received hire or wages, and therefore the apostle kept his resolution not to be chargeable to any of the Corinthians.

3. The false apostles are charged as *deceitful workers*, ver. 13. and that, upon this account, because they would transform themselves into the likeness of the apostles of Christ; and though they were the ministers of Satan, would seem to be the ministers of righteousness. They would be as industrious and as generous in promoting error, as the apostles were in preaching truth; they would endeavour as much to undermine the kingdom of Christ as the apostles did to establish it. There were counterfeit prophets under the Old Testament, that wore the garb, and learned the language of the prophets of the Lord. So there were counterfeit apostles under the New Testament, that seemed in many respects like the true apostles of Christ. And no marvel, (saith the apostle,) hypocrisy is a thing not to be much wondered at in this world, especially when we consider the great influence Satan hath upon the minds of many, who ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience. And as he can turn himself into any shape, and put on almost any form, and look sometimes like an angel of light, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, so he will teach his ministers and instruments to do the same. But it followeth, *their end is according to their works*, ver. 15. i. e. the end will discover them to be *deceitful workers*, and their work will end in ruin and destruction.

16. I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. 17. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. 18. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. 20. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. 21. I speak as concerning reproach as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinssoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

Here we have a further excuse, that the apostle maketh for what he was about to say in his own vindication.

(1.) He would not have them think he was guilty of folly, in saying what he said to vindicate himself. *Let no man think me a fool*, ver. 18. ordinarily indeed, it is unbecoming a wise man to be much and often

speaking in his own praise; boasting of ourselves is usually not only a sign of a proud mind, but a mark of folly also; however, saith the apostle, yet as a fool receive me, i. e. if ye do count it folly in me to boast a little, yet give due regard to what I shall say.

(2.) He mentioneth a caution to prevent abuse of what he should say, telling them what he spake, *he did not speak after the Lord*, ver. 17. i. e. He would not have them think, that boasting of ourselves, or glorying in what we have, is a thing commanded by the Lord in general unto Christians, nor yet that this is always necessary in our own vindication; though it may be lawfully used, because not contrary to the Lord, when, strictly speaking, it is not after the Lord. It is the duty and practice of Christians, in obedience to the command and example of the Lord, rather to humble and abase themselves; yet prudence must direct in what circumstances it is needful to do that which we may do lawfully, even speak of what God hath wrought for us, and in us, and by us too.

(3.) He giveth a good reason why they should suffer him to boast a little; namely, because they suffered others to do so, who had least reason. *Seeing many glory after the flesh*, i. e. of carnal privileges or outward advantages and attainments; *I will glory also*; ver. 18. But he would not glory in those things, though he had as much or more reason than others to do so.

But he gloried in his infirmities, as he tells them afterwards. The Corinthians thought themselves wise, and might think it an instance of wisdom to bear with the weakness of others, and therefore suffered others to do what might seem folly; and therefore the apostle would have them bear with him: Or these words, *Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise*, ver. 19. may be ironical, and then the meaning is this: notwithstanding all your wisdom, you willingly suffer yourselves to be brought into bondage under the Jewish yoke, or to suffer others to tyrannize over you; nay to devour you, or make a prey of you; and take of you hire for their own advantage; and to exalt themselves above you, and lord it over you; nay, even to smite you on the face, or impose upon you, to your very faces, ver. 20. upbraiding you whilst they reproach me, as if you had been very weak in shewing regard to me, ver. 21. And seeing this was the case, that the Corinthians, or some among them, could so easily bear all this from the false apostles, it was reasonable for the apostle to desire, and expect they should bear with what might seem to them an indiscretion in him, seeing the circumstances of the case were such as made it needful, that *whereinsoever any were bold*, he should be bold also, ver. 21.

22. Are they Hebrews? so am I: are they Israelites? so am I: are they the seed of Abraham? so am I: 23. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep. 26. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30. If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. 32. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Here the apostle gives a large account of his own qualifications, labours and sufferings, not out of pride or vain glory, but to the honour of God, who had enabled him to do and suffer so much for the cause of Christ; and wherein he excelled the false apostles, that would lessen his character and usefulness among the Corinthians. Observe,

1. He mentioneth the privileges of his birth, ver. 22. which were equal to any they could pretend to; he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, of a family among the Jews that never intermarried with the Gentiles: He was also an Israelite, and could boast of his being descended from the beloved Jacob as well as they: and was also of the seed of Abraham, and not of the proselytes. It should seem from hence, that the false prophets were of the Jewish race, who gave disturbance to the Gentile converts.

2. He maketh mention also of his apostleship; that he was more than an ordinary minister of Christ; ver. 23. God had counted him faithful, and had put him into the ministry; he had been an useful minister of Christ unto them, they had found full proofs of his ministry: *Are they ministers of Christ? I am more so*.

3. He chiefly insisteth upon this, that he had been an extraordinary sufferer for Christ; and this is what he gloried in, or rather he gloried in the grace of God that had enabled him to be more abundant in labours, and to endure very great suffering, such as stripes above measure, frequent imprisonments, and often in dangers of death, ver. 23. Note, When the apostle would prove himself an extraordinary minister, he proveth he had been an extraordinary sufferer. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and for that reason was hated of the Jews; they did all they could against him, and among the Gentiles also he met with hard usage. Bonds and imprisonments were familiar to him; never was the most notorious malefactor more frequently in the hands of public justice, than Paul was for righteousness sake: The jail and the whipping post, and all other hard usages of those that are accounted the worst of men, were what he was accustomed to. As to the Jews, whenever he fell into their hands, they never spared him: Five times he fell under their lash, and received forty stripes save one, ver. 23. Forty stripes was the utmost their law allowed, Deut. xxx. 3. but it was usual with them, that they might not exceed, to abate one at least of that number. And to have the abatement of one only, was all the favour that ever Paul received from them. The Gentiles were not tied up to that moderation,

and among them he was thrice beaten with rods, of which we may suppose once was at Philippi, Acts xvi. 22. Once he was stoned in a popular tumult, and was taken up for dead, Acts xvi. 19. He saith, that thrice he suffered shipwreck, and we may believe him, though the sacred history giveth a relation but of one. A night and a day he had been in the deep, ver. 25. i. e. in some deep dungeon or other shut up as a prisoner.

Thus he was all his days a constant confessor, perhaps scarce a year of his life after his conversion passed without suffering some hardship or other for his religion: yet this was not all, for wherever he went, he went in perils: he was exposed to perils of all sorts. If he journeyed by land, or voyaged by sea, he was in perils of robbers or enemies of some sort; the Jews his own countrymen sought to kill him, or do him a mischief; the heathen, to whom he was sent, were not more kind to him, for among them he was in peril: if he was in the city, or in the wilderness, still he was in peril: He was in peril not only amongst avowed enemies, but among them also that called themselves brethren, but were false brethren, ver. 26.

Besides all this, he had great weariness and painfulness in his ministerial labours, and there are things that will come into account shortly, and people will be reckoned with for all the cure and pains of their ministers concerning them. Paul was a stranger to wealth and plenty, power and pleasure, preferment and ease; he was in watchings often, and exposed to hunger and thirst; and fastings often, it may be out of necessity; and endured cold and nakedness, ver. 27. Thus was he, who was one of the greatest blessings of the age, used as if he had been the burden of the earth, and the plague of his generation. And yet this is not all, for as an apostle the care of all the churches lay on him, ver. 28. He mentions this last, as if this lay the heaviest upon him, and as if he could better bear all the persecutions of his enemies, than the scandals that were to be found in the churches he had the oversight of. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? ver. 29. There was not a weak Christian, that he did not sympathize with, nor any one scandalized but he was affected therewith. See what little reason we have to be in love with the pomp and plenty of this world, when this blessed apostle, one of the best of men that ever lived, excepting Jesus Christ, felt so much hardship in it. Nor was he ashamed of all this, but on the contrary, it was what he accounted his honour; and therefore as much against the grain as it was with him to glory, yet, saith he, if I must needs glory, if my adversaries will oblige me to it in my own necessary vindication, I will glory in these mine infirmities, ver. 30. Note, Sufferings for righteousness sake will the most of any thing redound to our honour.

In the two last verses he mentioneth one particular part of his sufferings out of its place, as if he had forgotten it before, or because the deliverance God wrought for him was most remarkable; namely, the danger he was in at Damascus, soon after he was converted, and not settled in Christianity, at least in the ministry and apostleship. This is recorded, Acts ix. 24, 25. This was his first great danger and difficulty, and the rest of his life was of a piece with that. And it is observable, that lest it should be thought he spoke more than was true, the apostle confirmeth this narrative with a solemn oath, or appeal to the omniscience of God, ver. 31. And it is a great comfort to a good man, that the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is an omniscient God, doth know the truth of all he saith, and knoweth all he doth, and all he suffereth for his sake.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter the apostle proceedeth in maintaining the honour of his apostleship. He magnified his office, when there were those that vilified it. What he saith in his own praise was only in his own justification, and the necessary defence of the honour of his ministry, the preservation of which was necessary to the success thereof. First, he maketh mention of the favour God had shewn him, and the honour done him, and the methods God took to keep him humble; and the use he made of his dispensation, ver. 1—10. Then he addresseth himself to the Corinthians, blaming them for what was faulty among them, and giving a large account of his behaviour, and kind intentions towards them, ver. 11, to the end.

1. IT is not expedient for me doubtless to glory: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: 2. I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. 6. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will not say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. 7. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Here we may observe,

(1.) The narrative the apostle giveth of the favours God had shewn him, and the honour he had done him; for doubtless he is the man in Christ of whom he speaketh: And concerning this, we may take notice,

1. Of the honour itself which was done to the apostle, viz. He was caught up into the third heaven, ver. 2. When this was we cannot say, whether

ther it was during those three days that he lay without sight at his conversion, or at some other time afterwards; much less can we pretend to say *how* this was, whether by a separation of his soul from his body, or by an extraordinary transport in the depth of contemplation: It would be presumption for us to determine, if not also to inquire into this matter: seeing the apostle himself saith, *whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell*. It was certainly a very extraordinary honour done him, in some sense he was caught up into the *third heaven*, i. e. the heaven of the blessed, above the *aerial* heaven, in which the fowls fly; or above the *starry* heaven, which is adorned with those glorious orbs: it was into the *third* heaven, where God doth most eminently manifest his glory. We are not capable of knowing all, nor is it fit we should know very much of the particulars of that glorious place and state; it is our duty and interest to give diligence to make sure to ourselves a mansion there; and if that be cleared up to us, then we should long to be removed thither to abide there for ever.

This third heaven is called *paradise*, ver. 4. in allusion to the earthly paradise, out of which Adam was driven for his transgression: it is called the paradise of God, *Rev. ii. 7.* signifying to us, that by Christ we are restored to all the joys and honours we lost by sin, yea unto much better. The apostle doth not mention what he *saw* in the third heaven, or paradise, but tells us *he heard unspeakable words*, such as it is not possible for a man to utter; such is the sublimeness of the matter, and our unacquaintedness with the language of the upper world: Nor was it *lawful* to utter those words, because while we are here in this world we have a more sure word of prophecy than such visions and revelations, *2 Pet. i. 19.* We read of the *tongue of angels*, as well as of men, and Paul knew as much of that as ever any man upon earth did, and yet preferred charity before it, i. e. the sincere love of God and our neighbour. This account which the apostle giveth us of his vision, should check our curious desires after forbidden knowledge, and teach us to improve the revelation God hath given us in his word. Paul himself, who had been in the third heaven, did not publish to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Christ, on that foundation the church is built, and on that we must build our faith and hope.

2. The modest and humble manner in which the apostle mentioneth this matter is observable. One would be apt to think, that one who had had such visions and revelations as these, should have boasted greatly of them; but, saith he, *it is not expedient for me doubtless to glory*, ver. 1. He therefore did not mention this immediately, not till *above fourteen years* after, ver. 2. And then it is not without some reluctance, as a thing which in a manner he was forced to, by the necessity of the case. Again he speaketh of himself in the third person, and doth not say *I am the man* that was thus honoured above other men. Again his humility appeareth by the check he seemeth to put upon himself in ver. 6. which plainly sheweth he delighted not to dwell upon this theme. Thus was he, who was not behind the chiefest of the apostles in dignity, very eminent for his humility. Note, It is an excellent thing to have a lowly spirit in the midst of high advancements, and those that abase themselves shall be exalted.

(2.) The apostle giveth an account of the methods God took to keep him humble, and to prevent his *being lifted up above measure*; and this he speaketh of to balance the account that was given before of the visions and revelations he had had. Note, When God's people communicate their experiences, let them always remember to take notice of what God had done to keep them humble, as well as what he hath done in favour to them, and for their advancement. Here observe,

1. The apostle was pained with a *thorn in the flesh*, and *buffeted with a messenger of Satan*, ver. 7. We are much in the dark what this was, whether some great trouble, or some great temptation: Some think it was an acute bodily pain or sickness; others think it was the indignities done him by the false apostles, and the opposition he met with from them, particularly on the account of his speech, which was contemptible. However this was, God oftentimes bringeth this good out of evil, that the reproaches of our enemies help to hide pride from us; and this is certain, what the apostle calleth a *thorn in his flesh*, was for a time very grievous to him; but the thorns Christ wore for us, and with which he was crowned, do sanctify and make easy all the thorns in the flesh we may at any time be afflicted with: for he *suffered being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted*. Temptations to sin are most grievous thorns, they are *messengers of Satan to buffet us*. Indeed it is a great grievance to a good man to be so much as tempted to sin.

2. The design of this was to keep the apostle humble, *lest he should be exalted above measure*, ver. 7. Paul himself knew he had not yet attained, *neither was already perfect*, and yet he was in danger of being lifted up with pride. If God love us, he will hide pride from us, and keep us from being exalted above measure; and spiritual burdens are ordered to cure spiritual pride. This thorn in the flesh is said to be a *messenger of Satan*, which he did not send with a good design, but on the contrary, with ill intentions, to discourage the apostle who had been so highly favoured of God, and hinder him in his work. But God designed this for good, and he overruled it for good, and made this messenger of Satan to be so far from being an hindrance, that it was a help to the apostle.

3. The apostle prayed earnestly to God for the removal of this sore grievance. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the flesh, we should *give ourselves to prayer*: Therefore we are sometimes tempted, that we may learn to pray. The apostle *besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him*, ver. 8. Note, Though afflictions are sent for our spiritual benefit, yet we may pray to God for the removal of them: We ought indeed to desire also, that they may reach the end for which they are designed. The apostle prayed earnestly, and repeated his requests, he besought the Lord *thrice*, i. e. often; So that if an answer be not given to the *first* prayer, nor to the *second*; we must hold on, and hold out till we receive an answer; Christ himself prayed to his Father *thrice*. As troubles are sent to teach us to pray, so they are continued, to teach us to *continue instant in prayer*.

4. We have an account of the answer given to the apostle's prayer; that although the trouble was not removed, yet an equivalent should be granted, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. Note, (1.) Though God accepted the prayer of faith, yet he doth not always answer it in the letter; as he sometimes granteth in wrath, so he sometimes denieth in love. (2.) That when God doth not remove our troubles and temptations; yet if he give us *grace sufficient* for us, we have no reason to complain, or to say he dealeth ill by us. It is a great comfort to us, whatever thorns in the flesh we are pained with, God's grace is sufficient for us. Grace signifieth two things. 1. The *good will of God towards us*, and that enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us, to support our souls and cheer up our spirits in all afflictions and distresses. 2. The *good work of God in us*, the grace we receive from the fulness that is in Christ our head; and from him there shall be communicated that which is suitable and seasonable, and sufficient for his members. Christ Jesus understands our case, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only strengthen us, but glorify himself. *His strength is made perfect in our weak-*

ness. Thus his grace is manifested and magnified; he ordaineth his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

3.) Here is the use which the apostle maketh of his dispensation, viz. *He gloried in his infirmities*, ver. 9. and *took pleasure in them*, ver. 10. He doth not mean his *sinful* infirmities, those we have reason to be ashamed of and grieved at; but he meaneth his afflictions, his *reproaches*, *necessities*, *persecutions*, and *distresses for Christ's sake*, ver. 10. And the reason of his glory and joy on account of these things was this: They were fair opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace *resting upon him*, by which he had so much experience of the strength of divine grace, that he could say, *When I am weak, then am I strong*. This is a Christian paradox; when we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace.

11. I am become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. 13. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. 14. Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you, for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. 16. But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless being crafty, I caught you with guile. 17. Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? 18. I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother: did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we not in the same steps?* 19. Again, think you that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ; but *we do* all things dearly beloved, for your edifying. 20. For I fear, lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would, and *that I shall be found unto you* such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: 21. And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.

In these verses the apostle addresseth himself to the Corinthians two ways.

(1.) He blameth them for what was faulty in them, viz. That they had not stood up in his defence as they ought to have done, and so made it the more needful for him to insist so much on his own vindication. They in a manner *compelled him* to commend himself, who *ought to have been commended of them*, ver. 11. And had they or some among them not failed on their part, it would have been less needful for him to have said so much on his own behalf. And he tells them further, they in particular had good reason to speak well of him, as being *in nothing behind the very chiefest apostles*, because he had given them full proof and evidence of his apostleship; for *the signs of an apostle were wrought among them in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds*. Note, 1. It is a debt we owe to good men, to stand up in the defence of their reputation; and we are under special obligations to those we have received benefit by, especially spiritual benefit, to own them as instruments in God's hand of good to us, and to vindicate them when they are calumniated by others. 2. How much soever we are or ought to be esteemed by others, we ought always to think humbly of ourselves. See an example of this in this great apostle, who thought himself to be *nothing*, though in truth he was not behind the chiefest apostles. So far was he from seeking praise from men, though he tells them the duty to vindicate his reputation; so far was he from applauding himself, when he was forced to insist upon his own necessary self-defence.

(2.) He giveth a large account of his behaviour and kind intentions towards them; in which we may observe the characters of a faithful minister of the gospel.

1. He was not willing to be burdensome to them, nor did he seek *theirs*, but *them*. He saith, ver. 13. he *had not been* burdensome to them for the time past, and tells them, ver. 14. he *would not be* burdensome to them for the time to come, when he should come to them: he spared their purses, and did not covet their money; *I seek not yours, but you*. He sought not to enrich himself, but to save their souls: he did not desire to make a property of them to himself, but to gain them over to Christ whose servant he was. Note, Those who aim at clothing themselves with the fleece of the flock, and take no care of the sheep, are hirelings, and not good shepherds.

2. He would *gladly spend and be spent* for them, ver. 15. i. e. he was willing to take pains and to suffer loss for their good. He would *spend* his time, his parts, his strength, his interest, his *all*, to do them service; nay, so spends as to be spent; and be like a candle which consumeth itself, to give light to others.

3. He did not abate in his love to them, notwithstanding their unkindness and ingratitude to him; and therefore was contented and glad to take pains with them, though *the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved*, ver. 15. This is applicable to other relations: if others be wanting in their duty to us, it doth not follow therefore that we may neglect our duty to them.

4. He was careful not only that *he himself* should not be burdensome, but that *none he employed* should. This seemeth to be the meaning of what we read, ver. 16, 18. If it should be objected by any, that though he did not himself burden them, yet that he *being crafty caught them with guile* i. e. he sent those among them that did pillage from them, and afterwards he shared with them in the profit. This was not so, saith the apostle, I did not

not make a gain of you myself, nor by any of them I sent; nor did Titus, nor any others. *We walked by the same spirit, and in the same steps.* They all agreed in this matter, to do them all the good they could without being burdensome to them; to promote the gospel among them, and make it as easy to them as possible. Or this may be read with an *interrogation*, as utterly disclaiming any guile in himself and others toward them.

5. He was a man that did all things *for edifying*, ver. 19. This was his great aim and design to do good, to lay the foundation well, and then with care and diligence to build the superstructure.

6. He would not baulk his duty for fear of displeasing them, though he was so careful to make himself easy to them. Therefore he was resolved to be faithful in reproving sin, though he was therein *found to be such as they would not*, ver. 20. The apostle here mentioned several sins that are too commonly found among professors of religion, and are very reprobable; *debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults*: and though those who are guilty of these sins can hardly bear to be reprov'd for them, yet faithful ministers must not fear offending the guilty by sharp reproofs, as they are needful, in public and in private.

7. He was grieved at the apprehension that he should find scandalous sins among them not duly repented of. This, he tells them, would be the cause of great humiliation and lamentation. Note, 1. The falls and miscarriages of professors cannot but be an humbling consideration to a good minister: and God sometimes taketh this way to humble those who might be under temptation to be lifted up. *I fear lest God will humble me among you.* 2. We have reason to bewail those that sin and do not repent, to *bewail many that have sinned and have not repented*, ver. 21. If these have not as yet grace to mourn and lament their own case, their case is the more lamentable; and those that love God, and love them, should mourn for them.

C H A P. XIII.

In this chapter the apostle threateneth to be severe against obstinate sinners, and assigneth the reason thereof, ver. 1—6. Then he maketh a suitable prayer to God on the behalf of the Corinthians, with the reasons inducing him thereto, ver. 7—10. And concludeth his epistle with a valediction and a benediction, ver. 11—14.

1. **T**HIS is the third time I am coming to you? in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2. I told you before, and foretel you as if I were present the second time, and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that if I come again I will not spare: 3. Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. 4. For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God; for we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. 5. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 6. But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

In these verses observe,

(1.) The apostle threateneth to be severe against obstinate sinners when he should come to Corinth, having now sent to them a first and second epistle, with proper admonitions and exhortations, in order to reform what was amiss among them. Concerning which we may take notice of,

1. The caution with which he proceeded in his censures: he was not hasty in his severity, but gave a first and second admonition. So some understand his words, ver. 1. *This is the third time I am coming to you*: referring to his first and second epistles, by which he admonished them, as if he were present with them, though in person he was absent, ver. 2. And according to this interpretation, these two epistles are the witnesses he meaneth in the first verse, referring rather to the direction of our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 16. concerning the manner how Christians should deal with offenders before they proceed to extremity, than to the law of Moses, Deut. xvii. 6.—xix. 5. for the behaviour of judges in criminal matters. We should go [or send] to our brother once and again to tell him of his faults. Thus the apostle had told these Corinthians before, i. e. in his former epistle, and now he tells them, or *writeth to them which heretofore had sinned, and to all other*, giving warning unto all before he came in person the third time, to exercise severity against scandalous offenders.

Others think the apostle had designed and prepared for his journey to Corinth twice already, but was providentially hindered, and now informeth them of his intentions a third time to come to them. However this be, it is observable he kept an account, how often he endeavoured, and what pains he took with these Corinthians for their good; and we may be sure an account is kept in heaven, and we must be reckoned with another day, for the helps we have had for our souls, and how we have improved them.

2. The threatening itself, *That if (or when) he came again (in person) he would not spare* obstinate sinners, and such as were impenitent, in their scandalous enormities. He had told them before, he feared God would humble him among them, because he should find some that had sinned and had not repented; and now he declareth he would not spare such, but would inflict church-censures upon them, which are thought to have been accompanied in those early times with visible and extraordinary tokens of divine displeasure. Note, Though it is God's gracious method to bear long with sinners, yet he will not bear always; at length he will come, and will not spare them who remain obstinate and impenitent, notwithstanding all his methods to reclaim and reform them.

(2.) The apostle assigneth a reason why he would be thus severe, namely, for a *proof of Christ speaking in him*, which they sought after, ver. 3. The evidence of his apostleship was necessary for the credit and confirmation, and success of the gospel he preached; and therefore such as denied that, were justly and severely to be censured. It was the design of the false teachers to make the Corinthians call this matter into question, which yet they had not weak but strong or mighty proofs of, ver. 3. notwithstanding the mean figure he made in the world, and the contempt which by some was cast upon him: even as Christ himself was crucified through weakness, or appeared in his crucifixion as a weak and contemptible person, but *liveth by the power of God*, or in his resurrection and life manifesteth his divine power, ver. 4. So the apostles, how mean and contemptible soever they appeared to the world, did yet, as instruments, manifest the power of God, and particularly the power of his grace, in converting the world to Chris-

tinuity. And therefore as a proof unto those who among the Corinthians sought a proof of Christ's speaking in the apostle, he puts them upon the proving their Christianity, ver. 5. *Examine yourselves, &c.* Hereby he intimateth, that if they could prove their own Christianity, this would be a proof of his apostleship: for if they were in the faith, if Jesus Christ was in them, this was a proof Christ spake in him, because it was by his ministry they did believe. He had been not only an instructor, but a father to them. He had begotten them again by the gospel of Christ. Now, it could not be imagined that a divine power should go along with his ministrations, if he had not his commission from on high. If therefore they could prove themselves not to be reprobates, i. e. not to be rejected of Christ, he trusted they should know that he was not a reprobate, ver. 6. i. e. not disowned by Christ.

What the apostle here saith of the duty of the Corinthians to *examine themselves, &c.* with the particular view already mentioned, is applicable to the great duty of all that call themselves Christians, to examine themselves concerning their spiritual state. We should examine whether we be in the faith, because it is a matter in which we may be easily deceived, and wherein a deceit is highly dangerous: we are therefore concerned to *prove our own selves*, to put the question to our own souls, whether Christ be in us, or not; and Christ is in us, *except we be reprobates*: So that either we are true Christians, or we are great cheats; and what a reproachful thing is it for a man not to know himself, not to know his own mind?

7. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest though we be as reprobates. 8. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9. For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection. 10. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification and not to destruction.

Here we have,

(1.) The apostle's prayer to God on the behalf of the Corinthians, that they might do no evil, ver. 7. This is the most desirable thing we can ask of God, both for ourselves and for our friends, to be kept from sin, that we and they may do no evil; and it is most needful, that we often pray to God for his grace to keep us, because without that we cannot keep ourselves. We are more concerned to pray that we may not do evil, than that we may not suffer evil.

(2.) The reasons why the apostle put up this prayer to God, on behalf of the Corinthians; which reasons have a special reference to their case, and the subject matter about which he was writing to them. Observe, he tells them,

1. It was not so much for his own personal reputation, as for the honour of religion; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, or decent, and for the credit of religion, though we should be reproached and villified, and accounted as reprobates, ver. 7. Note, (1.) The great desire of faithful ministers of the gospel is, that the gospel they preach may be honoured, however their persons may be villified. (2.) The best way to adorn our holy religion, is to do that which is honest, and of good report; to walk so as becometh the gospel of Christ.

2. Another reason was this; that they might be free from all blame and censure when he should come to them. This is intimated in ver. 8. *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.* If therefore they did not do evil, nor act contrary to their profession of the gospel, the apostle had no power nor authority to punish them. He had said before, chap. x. 8. and saith here, ver. 10. *The power which the Lord had given him was to edification, not to destruction.* So that although the apostle had great powers committed to him for the credit and advancement of the gospel, yet he could not do any thing to the disparagement of those who obeyed it. He could not, i. e. he would not, he dared not, he had no commission to act against the truth; and it is remarkable how the apostle did rejoice in this blessed impotency. *We are glad, saith he, ver. 9, when we are weak, and ye are strong*, i. e. that we have no power to censure those who are strong in the faith, and fruitful in good works. Some understand this passage thus, Though we are weak through persecutions and contempt, we bear it patiently, and also joyfully, while we see that you are strong, that you are prosperous in holiness, and persevering in well doing. For,

(3.) He desired their perfection, ver. 9. i. e. that they might be sincere, and aim at perfection: sincerity is our gospel-perfection; or else he wished there might be a thorough reformation amongst them. He not only desired that they might be kept from sin, but also that they might grow in grace, and increase in holiness, and that all that was amiss among them might be rectified and reformed. This was the great end of his writing this epistle, and that freedom he used with them by writing these things, i. e. those friendly admonitions and warnings, being absent, that so being present he should not use sharpness, ver. 10. i. e. not proceed to the utmost extremity in the exercise of the power which the Lord had given him as an apostle, to *revenge all disobedience*, chap. x. 6.

11. Finally, brethren, farewell: Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 12. Greet one another with an holy kiss. 13. All the saints salute you. 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Thus the apostle concludeth this epistle with,

(1.) A valediction. He giveth them a parting farewell, and taketh his leave of them for the present with hearty good wishes for their spiritual welfare. In order to which,

1. He giveth them several good exhortations, e. g. (1.) To be perfect, or to be knit together in love, which would tend greatly to their benefit and advantage, as a church or Christian society. (2.) To be of good comfort under all the sufferings and persecutions they might endure for the cause of Christ, or any calamities and disappointments they might meet with in the world. (3.) To be of one mind, which would greatly tend to their comfort; for the more easy we are with our brethren, the more ease we shall have in our own souls. The apostle would have them as far as was possible to be of the same opinion and judgment; however, if this could not be attained to, yet, (4.) He exhorteth them to live in peace, that difference in opinion should not cause an alienation of affections; that they

they should be at peace among themselves. He would have all the schisms healed that were among them, that there should be no more contention and wrath found among them; to prevent which they should avoid *debates, enoyings, backbitings, whisperings*, and such like enemies to peace.

2. He encourageth them with the promise of God's presence among them, *The God of Love and peace shall be with you*, ver. 11. Note, (1.) God is the God of love and peace. He is the author of peace, and lover of concord; he hath loved us, and is willing to be at peace with us; and commands us to love him, and to be reconciled to him, and also that we love one another, and be at peace among ourselves. (2.) God will be with them that live in love and peace. He will love them that love peace; he will dwell with them here, and they shall dwell with him for ever. Such shall have God's *gracious* presence here, and be admitted to his *glorious* presence hereafter.

3. He giveth directions to them to salute each other, and sends kind salutations to them from those that were with him, ver. 12, 13. He would have them testify their affection to one another by the sacred rite of a *kiss of charity*, which was then used, but hath long been disused, to prevent all occasions of wantonness and impurity, in the more declining and degenerate state of the church.

(2.) The apostolical benediction, ver. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.* Thus the apostle concluded his epistle, and thus it is as usual and proper to dismiss worshipping assemblies. This plainly proveth the doctrine of the gospel, and is an acknowledgement, that *Father, Son, and Spirit*, are three distinct persons, yet but one God; and herein the same, that they are the fountain of all blessings to men. It likewise speaketh our duty, which is to have an eye by faith to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to live in continual regard to the three persons in the *Trinity*, into whose name we were *baptized*, and into whose name we are *blest*.

This is a very solemn benediction, and we should give all diligence to inherit this blessing, viz. The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion (or communication) of the Holy Ghost: The grace of Christ as Redeemer, the love of God that sent the Redeemer, and all the communications of this grace and love which come to us by the Holy Ghost; it is the communication of the Holy Ghost that qualify us for an interest in the grace of Christ, and the love of God; and we can desire no more to make us happy than the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

THE END OF THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE EPISTLE OF St. Paul to the Galatians.

This Epistle of Paul is directed not to the church or churches of a single city, as some others are; but of a country or province; for so Galatia was. It is very probable that these Galatians were first converted to the Christian faith by his ministry; but if he was not the instrument of planting, yet at least he had been employed in watering these churches, as is evident from this Epistle itself, and also from *Acts xviii. 23.* where we find him going over all the country of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, strengthening all the disciples.

While he was with them, they had expressed the greatest esteem and affection both for his person and ministry, but he had not been long absent from them before some judaizing teachers got in among them, by whose arts and insinuations they were soon drawn into a meaner opinion both of the one and of the other.

That which these false teachers chiefly aimed at, was to draw them off from the truth as it is in Jesus, particularly in the great doctrine of justification, which they grossly perverted by asserting the necessity of joining the observation of the law of Moses with faith in Christ in order to it; and the better to accomplish this their design, they did all they could to lessen the character and reputation of the apostle, and to raise up their own on the ruins of his: representing him as one who, if he was to be owned as an apostle, yet was much inferior to others, and particularly who deserved not such a regard as Peter, James, and John, whose followers, it is likely, they pretended to be; and in both these attempts they had but too great success.

This was the occasion of his writing this Epistle: wherein he expresses his great concern, that they had suffered themselves to be so soon turned aside from the faith of the gospel; vindicates his own character and authority as an apostle against the aspersions of his enemies; shewing that his mission and doctrine were both divine, and that he was not, upon any account, *behind the very chiefest of the apostles*, 2 Cor. xi. 5. He then sets himself to assert and maintain the great gospel-doctrine of justification of faith without the works of the law, and to obviate some difficulties that might be apt to arise in their minds concerning it: and having established this important doctrine, he exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, cautions them against the abuse of this liberty, gives them several needful counsels and directions; and then concludes the Epistle with giving them the true character of those false teachers by whom they had been ensnared: and on the contrary, with his own temper and behaviour. In all which his great scope and design was, to recover those that had been perverted, to settle those that might be wavering, and to confirm such among them as had kept their integrity.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter, after the preface or introduction, ver. 1—6. the apostle severely reproves these churches for their defection from the faith, ver. 6—10. And then proves his own apostleship, which his enemies had brought them to question, (1.) From his end and design in preaching the gospel, ver. 10, (2.) From his having received it by immediate revelation, ver. 11, 12. For the proof of which he acquaints them, (1.) What his former conversation was, ver. 13, 14. (2.) How he was converted and called to the apostleship, ver. 15, 16. (3.) How he behaved himself afterwards, ver. 16, to the end.

1. PAUL, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2. And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3. Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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In these verses we have the preface or introduction to the epistle. Where observe,

(1.) The person or persons from whom this epistle is sent, from Paul an apostle, &c. and all the brethren that were with him. (1.) The epistle is sent from Paul, he only was the penman of it. And because there were some among the Galatians who endeavoured to lessen his character and authority, in the very front of it he gives a general account, both of his office, and the manner in which he was called to it; Which afterwards in this and the following chapter he enlarges more upon. As to his office, he was an apostle, he is not afraid to stile himself so, though his enemies would scarce allow him this title; and to let them see that he did not assume this character without just ground, he acquaints them how he was called to this dignity and office, and assures them that his commission to it was wholly divine, for he was an apostle, *not of man, neither by man*; he had not the common call of an ordinary minister, but an extraordinary call from heaven to this office; he neither received his qualification for it, nor his designation to it, by the mediation of men, but had both the one and the other directly from above; for he was an apostle *by Jesus Christ*, he had his instructions and commission immediately from him; and consequently from God the Father, who in respect of his divine nature was one with him, and who, as mediator, had appointed him to be the apostle and high priest of our profession, and as such to authorize others to this office. And he adds, *Who raised him from the dead*, both to acquaint us, that herein God the Father gave a public testimony to Christ's being his son and the promised Messiah; and also, that as his call to the apostleship was immediately from Christ, so it was after his resurrection from the dead, and when he

was entered upon his exalted state. So that he had reason to look upon himself, not only as standing upon a level with the other apostles, but as in some sort preferred above them; for whereas they were called by him when on earth, he had his call from him when in heaven. Thus does the apostle (being constrained to it by his adversaries) magnify his office; which shews, that though men should by no means be proud of any authority they are possessed of, yet at some times and upon some occasions it may become needful to assert it. But, (2.) He joins *all the brethren that were with him* in the inscription to the epistle, and writes in their name as well as his own. By *the brethren that were with him*, may be understood either the Christians in common at that place where he now was, or such as were employed as ministers of the gospel. These, notwithstanding his own superior character and attainments, he is ready to own as his brethren; and though he only wrote the epistle, yet he joins them with himself in the inscription of it. Wherein as he shews his own great modesty and humility, and how remote he was from an assuming temper, so he might do this to dispose these churches to a greater regard to what he wrote, since hereby it would appear that he had their concurrence with him in the doctrine which he had preached, and was now about to confirm, and that it was no other than what was both published and professed by others, as well as himself.

(2.) To whom this epistle is sent, *to the churches of Galatia*; there were several churches at that time in this country, and it should seem that all of them were more or less corrupted through the arts of those seducers who had crept in among them; and therefore Paul, on whom *came daily the care of all the churches*, being deeply affected with their state, and concerned for their recovery to the faith and establishment in it, writes this epistle to them; he directs it to all of them, as being all more or less concerned in the matter of it; and he gives them the name of churches, though they had done enough to forfeit it; for corrupt churches are never allowed to be churches; and no doubt there were some among them who still continued in the faith, and he was not without hope that others might be recovered to it.

(3.) The apostolical benediction, *ver. 3.* Wherein the apostle and the brethren that were with him wish these churches *grace and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is the usual blessing wherewith he blest the churches in the name of the Lord, *grace and peace*. Grace includes God's good-will towards us, and his good work upon us; and peace implies in it all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really useful for us; and they come from God the Father, as the fountain, through Jesus Christ, as the channel of conveyance; both these the apostle wishes for these Christians. But we may observe, first *grace*, and then *peace*, for there can be no true peace without grace. And having mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot pass without enlarging upon his love; and therefore adds, *ver. 4. Who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver, &c.* Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, as a great sacrifice to make atonement for us; this the justice of God required, and this he freely submitted to for our sakes; and one great end hereof was *to deliver us from this present evil world*; not only to redeem us from the wrath of God and the curse of the law, but also to recover us from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and to rescue us from the vicious practices and customs of it, unto which we are naturally enslaved; and possibly also to set us free from the Mosaic constitution, for *so aim we*, is used, *1 Cor. ii. 6—8.* From whence we may note, (1.) That this present world is an evil world, it is become so by the sin of man, and it is on the account of the sin and sorrow with which it abounds, and the many snares and temptations to which we are exposed as long as we continue in it. But, (2.) That Jesus Christ has died to deliver us from this present evil world, not presently to remove his people out of it, but to rescue them from the power of it, to keep them from the evil of it, and in due time to possess them of another and better world: and this the apostle informs us he has done according to the will of God and our Father. In offering up himself a sacrifice for this end and purpose, he acted by the appointment of the Father, as well as with his own free consent; and therefore we have the greatest reason to depend upon the efficacy and acceptableness of what he has done and suffered for us: Yea from hence we have encouragement to look upon God as our Father; for thus the apostle here represents him; as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus, so in and through him he is also the Father of all true believers; as our blessed Saviour himself acquaints us, *John xx. 17.* when he tells his disciples, that he was ascending to his Father and their Father.

The apostle having thus taken notice of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved us, concludes this preface with a solemn ascription of praise and glory to him, *ver. 5. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* Intimating, that on this account he is justly entitled to our highest esteem and regard: or this doxology may be considered as referring both to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom he had just before been wishing grace and peace. They are both the proper objects of our worship and adoration, and all honour and glory is perpetually due to them, both on the account of their own infinite excellencies, and also on the account of the blessings we receive from them.

6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Here the apostle comes to the body of the epistle, and he begins it with a more general reproof of these churches for their unsteadiness in the faith, which he afterwards in some following parts of it enlarges more upon. Here we may observe,

(1.) How much he was concerned at their defection. *I marvel, &c.* It at once filled him with the greatest surprise and sorrow. Their sin and folly was that they did not hold fast the doctrine of Christianity as it had been preached to them, but suffered themselves to be removed from the purity and simplicity of it: and there were several things by which their defection was greatly aggravated. (1.) That they were removed from him that had called them. Not only from the apostle, who had been the instrument of calling them into the fellowship of the gospel, but from God himself, by whose order and direction the gospel was preached to them, and they invited to a participation of the privileges of it. So that herein they had been guilty of a great abuse of his kindness and mercy towards

them. (2.) That they had been called into the grace of Christ. As the gospel which had been preached to them was the most glorious discovery of divine grace and mercy in Christ Jesus: so thereby they had been called to partake of the greatest blessings and benefits, such as justification and reconciliation with God here, and eternal life and happiness hereafter. These our Lord Jesus has purchased for us at the expence of his precious blood, and freely bestows upon all that sincerely accept of him: And therefore in proportion to the greatness of the privilege they enjoyed, such was their sin and folly in deserting it, and suffering themselves to be drawn off from the established way of obtaining those blessings. (3.) That they were so soon removed. In a very little time they lost that relish and esteem of this grace of Christ, which they seemed to have, and too easily fell in with those that taught justification by the works of the law, as many did that had been bred up in the opinions and notions of the Pharisees, which they mingled with the doctrine of Christ, and so corrupted it; and this, as it was an instance of their weakness, so it was a further aggravation of their guilt. (4.) That they were removed to another gospel, which yet was not another. Thus the apostle represents the doctrine of these Judaizing teachers; he calls it *another gospel*, because it opened a different way of justification and salvation from that which was revealed in the gospel, viz. by works and not by faith in Christ. And yet he adds, *which is not another*, i. e. You will find it to be no gospel at all. Not really another gospel, but the perverting of the gospel of Christ, and the overturning of the foundations of that; whereby he intimates, they who go about to establish any other way to heaven, than what the gospel of Christ has revealed, are guilty of a gross perversion of it, and in the issue will find themselves wretchedly mistaken.

Thus the apostle endeavours to impress upon these Galatians a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel way of justification; and yet at the same time he tempers his reproof with mildness and tenderness towards them, and represents them as rather drawn into it by the arts and industry of some that troubled them, than as coming into it of their own accord; which though it did not excuse them, yet was some extenuation of their fault. And hereby he teaches us, that in reproving of others, as we should be faithful, so we should also be gentle, and endeavour to restore them in the spirit of meekness, chap. vi. 1.

(2.) How confident he was, that the gospel he had preached to them, was the only true gospel; he was so fully persuaded of this, that he pronounces an anathema upon those that pretend to preach any other gospel, *ver. 8.* And to let them see that this did not proceed from any rashness or intemperate zeal in him, he repeats it again, *ver. 9.* This will not justify our thundering out anathemas against those that differ from us in lesser things. It is only against those that forge a new gospel, that overturn the foundation of the covenant of grace, by setting up the works of the law in the place of Christ's righteousness, and corrupting Christianity and Judaism, that Paul denounces this. He puts the case, *suppose we should preach any other gospel*: nay, suppose an angel from heaven should, not as if it were possible for an angel from heaven to be the messenger of a lie: but it is expressed so, the more to strengthen what he was about to say. If you have any other gospel preached to you by any other person under our name, or under colour of having it from an angel himself; you must conclude you are imposed upon: and who ever preaches another gospel lays himself under a curse, and is in danger of laying you under it too.

10. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. 11. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past, in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14. And profited in the Jews religion, above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again into Damascus. 18. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not. 21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ: 23. But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in time past, now preaching the faith which once he destroyed. 24. And they glorified God in me.

What Paul had said more generally in the preface of this epistle, he now proceeds more particularly to enlarge upon: There he had declared himself to be an apostle of Christ; and here he comes more directly to support his claim to that character and office. There were some in the churches of Galatia, who were prevailed with to call this into question; for they that preached up the ceremonial law, did all they could to lessen Paul's reputation, who preached the pure gospel of Christ to the Gentiles; and therefore he here sets himself to prove the divinity, both of his mission and doctrine, that thereby he might wipe off the aspersions which his enemies had cast upon him, and recover these Christians into a better opinion of the gospel he had preached to them. This he gives sufficient evidence of,

1. From the scope and design of his ministry, which was not to persuade men, but God, &c. The meaning of this may be, either that in his preaching the gospel he did not act in obedience to men, but God, who had called him to this work and office: or that his aim therein was not to bring persons to the obedience of men, but of God. As he professed to act by a commission from God; so that which he chiefly aimed at, was to promote his

his glory, by recovering sinners into a state of subjection to him. And as this was the great end he was pursuing, so agreeably hereunto, *he did not seek to please men*; He did not in his doctrine accommodate himself to the humours of persons, either to gain their affection, or to avoid their resentment; but his great care was to approve himself to God. The judaizing teachers, by whom these churches were corrupted, had discovered a very different temper; they mixed works with faith, and the law with the gospel, only to please the Jews, whom they were willing to court and keep in with, that they might escape persecution. But Paul was a man of another spirit; he was not so solicitous to please them, or to mitigate their rage against him, as to alter the doctrine of Christ, either to gain their favour or to avoid their fury. And he gives this very good reason for it, that *if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ*; These he knew were utterly inconsistent, and that no man could serve two such masters; and therefore though he would not needlessly displease any, yet he dare not allow himself to gratify men at the expense of his faithfulness to Christ. Thus from the sincerity of his aims and intentions in the discharge of his office, he proves that he was truly an apostle of Christ. And from this his temper and behaviour we may note, 1. That the great end which ministers of the gospel should aim at, is to bring men to God. 2. That they who are faithful will not seek to please men, but to approve themselves to God. 3. That they must not be solicitous to please men, if they would approve themselves faithful servants to Christ. But if this argument should not be thought sufficient, he goes on to prove his apostleship.

2. From the manner wherein he received the gospel he preached to them: concerning which he assures them, *ver. 11, 12.* that he had it not by information from others, but by revelation from heaven. One thing peculiar in the character of an apostle was, that he had been called to, and instructed for, this office immediately by Christ himself. And this he here shews he was by no means defective in, whatever his enemies might suggest to the contrary: Ordinary ministers, as they receive their call to preach the gospel by the mediation of others, so it is by means of the instruction and assistance of others, that they are brought to the knowledge of it. But Paul acquaints them, that he had his knowledge of the gospel, as well as his authority to preach it, directly from the Lord Jesus; the gospel which he preached, was not *after man*, he neither received it of man, nor was he taught it by man, but by immediate inspiration, or revelation from Christ himself. This he was concerned to make out, to prove himself an apostle; and to this purpose,

(1.) He tells them what his education was, and what accordingly his conversation in time past had been, *ver. 13, 14.* particularly he acquaints them, that he had been brought up in the Jewish religion, and that he had profited in it above many his equals of his own nation; That he had been exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the elders, such doctrines and customs as had been invented by their fathers, and conveyed down from one generation to another; yea to that degree, that in his zeal for them, he had beyond measure persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. He had not only been a rejector of the Christian religion, and notwithstanding the many evident proofs that were given of its divine original; but he had been a persecutor of it too, and had employed himself with the utmost violence and rage to destroy the professors of it. This Paul often takes notice of for the magnifying of that free and rich grace, that had wrought so wonderful a change in him, whereby of so great a sinner he was made a sincere penitent, and from a persecutor he was become an apostle. And it was very fit to mention it here; for from hence it would appear, that he was not led to Christianity, as many others are, purely by education, since he had been bred up in an enmity and opposition to it; and they might reasonably suppose, that it must be something very extraordinary that had made so great a change in him, which had conquered the prejudices of his education, and brought him not only to profess, but to preach that doctrine which he had before so vehemently opposed.

(2.) In how wonderful a manner he was turned from the error of his ways, brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ, and appointed to the office of an apostle, *ver. 15, 16.* This was not done in an ordinary way, or by ordinary means, but in an extraordinary manner. For, (1.) God had separated him hereunto from his mother's womb; the change that was wrought in him, was in pursuance of a divine purpose concerning him; whereby he was appointed to be a Christian and an apostle, before he came into the world, or had done either good or evil. (2.) He was called by his grace. All that are savingly converted are called by the grace of God, their conversion is the effect of his good pleasure concerning them, and is effected by his power and grace in them. But there was something peculiar in the case of Paul, both in the suddenness and greatness of the change wrought in him; and also in the manner wherein it was effected, which was not by the mediation of others, as the instruments of it, but by Christ's personal appearance to him, and immediate operation upon him, whereby it was rendered a more special and extraordinary instance of divine power and favour. (3.) He had Christ revealed in him. He was not only revealed to him but in him. It will but little avail us to have Christ revealed to us, if he is not also revealed in us; but this was not the case of Paul, it pleased God to reveal his son in him, to bring him to the knowledge of Christ and his gospel by special and immediate revelation. And, (4.) It was with the design, that he should preach him among the heathen; not only that he should embrace him himself, but preach him to others; so that he was both a Christian and an apostle by revelation.

(3.) He acquaints them how he behaved himself hereupon, from *ver. 16* to the end; being thus called to this work and office, *he conferred not with flesh and blood.* This may be taken more generally, and so we may learn from it that when God calls us by his grace, we must not consult flesh and blood. But the meaning of it here is, that he did not consult men; he did not apply himself to any other for their advice and direction: neither did he go up to Jerusalem to those that were apostles before him; as though he needed to be approved by them, or to receive any further instructions or authority from them: But instead of that he steered another course, and went into Arabia, either as a place of retirement proper for receiving further divine revelations; or in order to preach the gospel there among the Gentiles, being appointed to be the apostle of the Gentiles; and from thence he returned again to Damascus, where he had first begun his ministry; and from whence he had with difficulty escaped the rage of his enemies, *Acts ix.* And it was not till three years after his conversion, that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter: and when he did so he made but a very short stay with him, no more than fifteen days; nor while he was there did he go much into conversation; for other of the apostles he saw none, but James the Lord's brother. So that it could not well be pretended that he was indebted to any other, either for his knowledge of the gospel, or his authority to preach it; but it appeared that both his qualifications for, and his call to the apostolic office were extraordinary and divine. This account being of importance, to establish his claim to this office, to remove the unjust censures of his adversaries, and to recover the Galatians from the impressions they had received to his prejudice; he confirms it by a solemn oath, *ver. 20.* declaring as in the presence of God, that what he had said was strictly true, and that he had not in the least falsified in what he had related; which though it will

not justify us in solemn appeals to God upon every occasion; yet shews that in matters of weight and moment, this sometimes may not only be lawful but duty. After this he acquaints them, that he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; having made this short visit to Peter, he returns to his work again; he had no communication at that time with the churches of Christ in Judea, they had not so much as seen his face: But having heard that he who persecuted them in times past, now preached the faith which he once destroyed, they glorified God because of him; thanksgivings were rendered by many unto God, on that behalf; the very report of this mighty change in him, as it filled them with joy, so it excited them to give glory to God on the account of it.

C H A P. II.

The apostle in this chapter continues the relation of his past life and conduct, which he had begun in the former; and by some farther instances of what had passed between him and the other apostles, makes it appear that he was not beholden to them, either for his knowledge of the gospel, or his authority as an apostle, as his adversaries would insinuate; but, on the contrary, that he was owned and approved even by them, as having an equal commission with them to this office. Particularly he, (1.) Informs them of another journey which he took to Jerusalem many years after the former; and how he behaved himself at that time, *ver. 1—11.* And, (2.) Gives them an account of another interview he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch; and how he was obliged to behave himself towards him there. And from the subject matter of that conversation, he proceeds to discourse on the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law; which it was the main design of this epistle to establish, and which he enlarges more upon in the two following chapters.

1. THEN fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. 3. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4. And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6. But of those who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's persons:) for they who seemed to be somewhat, in confidence added nothing to me: 7. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8. (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles;) 9. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship: that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

It should seem by the account Paul gives of himself in this chapter, that from the very first preaching and planting of Christianity, there was a difference of apprehension between those Christians that had first been Jews and those that had first been Gentiles. Many of those that had been first Jews, retained a regard to the ceremonial law, and strove to keep up the reputation of that; but those that had first been Gentiles had no regard to the law of Moses, but took pure Christianity as perfective of natural religion, and resolved to stick to that. Peter was the apostle of the circumcision, preached the gospel to them, and the ceremonial law, though dead with Christ, yet not being as yet buried, he contrived that the respect kept up for it. But Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles; and though he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet he adhered to pure Christianity. Now in this chapter he tells us what passed between him and the other apostles, and particularly between him and Peter hereupon.

In these verses he informs us of another journey which he took to Jerusalem, and of what passed between him and the other apostles there, from *ver. 1* to the 11th. And here he acquaints us,

(1.) With some circumstances relating to this his journey thither. As particularly,

(1.) With the time of it; that it was not till fourteen years after the former, mentioned *chap. i. 18.* or (as others choose to understand it) from his conversion, or from the death of Christ. It was an instance of the great goodness of God, that so useful a person was for so many years continued in his work. And it was some evidence that he had no dependence upon the other apostles, but had an equal authority with them; that he had been so long absent from them, and all the while employed in preaching and propagating pure Christianity, without being called into question by them for it; which it may be thought they would have done, had he been inferior to them, and his doctrine disapproved by them. (2.) With his companions in it; he went up with Barnabas, and took with him Titus also. If the journey here spoken of was the same with that recorded *Acts xv.* (as many think) then we have a plain reason why Barnabas went along with him; for he was chosen by the Christians at Antioch to be his companion and associate in the affair he went about. But as it does not appear that Titus was put into the same commission with him, so the chief reason of his taking him along with him seems to have been to let them at Jerusalem see, that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to own the doctrine which he had constantly preached; For though Titus was now become not only convert to the Christian faith, but a preacher of it too, yet he was by birth a Gentile, and uncircumcised. And therefore, by his making him his companion

companion it appeared that his doctrine and practice were of a piece; and that as he had preached the non-necessity of circumcision, and observing the law of Moses, so he was ready to own and converse with those that were uncircumcised. (3.) With the reason of it, which was a divine revelation he had concerning it; *he went up by revelation*; not of his own head, much less as being summoned to appear there, but by special order and direction from heaven. It was a privilege with which this apostle was often favoured, to be under a special divine conduct in his motions and undertakings; and though this is what we have no reason to expect, yet it should teach us in every thing of moment we go about, to endeavour, as far as we are capable, to see our way made plain before us, and to commit ourselves to the guidance of providence.

(2.) He gives us an account of his behaviour while he was at Jerusalem; which was such as made it appear, that he was not in the least inferior to the other apostles; but that both his authority and qualifications were every way equal to theirs. Particularly he acquaints us,

(1.) That he there communicated the gospel to them, which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately, &c. Where we may observe both the faithfulness and prudence of our great apostle. (1.) His faithfulness in giving them a free and fair account of the doctrine which he had all along preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach, viz. that of pure Christianity, free from all mixtures of Judaism. This he knew was a doctrine that would be ungrateful to many there, and yet he was not afraid to own it; but in a free and friendly manner lays it open before them, and leaves them to judge whether or no it was not the true gospel of Christ. And yet, (2.) He uses prudence and caution herein for fear of giving offence; he chooses rather to do it in a more private than in a public way, and to them that were of reputation, viz. to the apostles themselves, or to the chief among the Jewish Christians, rather than more openly and promiscuously to all; because when he came to Jerusalem, there were multitudes that believed, and yet continued zealous for the law, Acts xxv. 24. And the reason of this his caution was, lest he should run, or had run in vain, i. e. lest he should stir up opposition against him, and thereby either the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed: For nothing more hinders the progress of the gospel, than differences of opinion about the doctrines of it; especially when they occasion quarrels and contentions among the professors of it, as they too usually do. It was enough to his purpose to have his doctrine owned by those that were of greatest authority, whether it was approved by others or no. And therefore to avoid offence, he judges it safest to communicate it privately to them and not in public to the whole church. And this conduct of the apostle may teach all, and especially ministers, how much need they have of prudence, and how careful they should be to use it upon all occasions, as far as is consistent with their faithfulness.

(2.) That in his practice he firmly adhered to the doctrine which he had preached. Paul was a man of resolution, and would stick to his principles; and therefore though he had Titus with him, who was a Greek, yet he would not suffer him to be circumcised, because he would not betray the doctrine of Christ, as he had preached it to the Gentiles. It does not appear that the apostles at all insisted upon this, for though they connived at the use of circumcision among the Jewish converts, yet they were not for imposing it upon the Gentiles. But there were others that did, whom the apostle here calls *false brethren*; and concerning whom he informs us, that they were *unlawfully brought in*, i. e. into the church, or into their company, and that they came only to *spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus*, or to see whether Paul would stand up in defence of that freedom from the ceremonial law, which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the Christian religion. And their design herein was to bring them into bondage, which they would have effected, could they have gained the point they aimed at; for had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus, they would easily have imposed circumcision upon other Gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the law of Moses. But Paul seeing their design, would by no means yield to them; he would not give place by submission, no not for an hour. Not in this one single instance; and the reason of it was, that the truth of the gospel might continue with them: That the Gentile Christians, and particularly the Galatians, might have it preserved to them pure and entire, and not corrupted with the mixtures of Judaism, as it would have been had he yielded in this manner. Circumcision was at that time a thing indifferent, and what in some cases might be complied with without sin; and accordingly we find even Paul himself sometimes giving way to it, as in the case of Timothy, Acts xvi. 3. But when it is insisted on as necessary, and his consenting to it, though only in a single instance, was like to be improved as giving countenance to such an imposition, he has too great a concern for the purity and liberty of the gospel to submit to it; he would not yield to those that were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Which conduct of his may give us occasion to observe, That what under some circumstances may lawfully be complied with, yet when that cannot be done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty of the gospel, it ought to be refused.

(3.) That though he conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge, or authority from them, ver. 6. By those who seemed to be somewhat, he means the other apostles, particularly James, Peter, and John, whom he afterwards mentions by name, ver. 9. and concerning these he grants, that they were deservedly had in reputation by all; that they were looked upon (and justly too) as pillars of the church, who were set not only for the ornament, but support of it; and that on some accounts they might seem to have the advantage of him, in that they had seen Christ in the flesh, which he had not, and were apostles before him, yea even while he continued a persecutor. But yet, *Whatever they were it was no matter to him*. This was no prejudice to his being equally an apostle with them; for God does not accept the persons of men on the account of any such outward advantages. As he had called them to this office, so he was at liberty to qualify others for it, and to employ them in it. And it was evident in this case, that he had done so; for in conference they added nothing to him, they told him nothing but what he before knew by revelation, nor could they except against the doctrine which he communicated to them: From whence it appeared, that he was not at all inferior to them, but was as much called, and qualified to be an apostle, as they themselves were.

(4.) That the issue of this conversation was, that the other apostles were fully convinced of his divine mission and authority, and accordingly acknowledged him as their fellow-apostle, ver. 7—11. They were not only satisfied with his doctrine, but they saw a divine power attending him, both in preaching it, and in working miracles for the confirmation of it; that he who wrought effectual in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision the same was mighty in him towards the Gentiles. And from hence they justly concluded, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as the gospel of the circumcision was to Peter. And therefore, perceiving the grace that was given to him; that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves; they gave unto him and Bar-

nabas the right hands of fellowship, a symbol whereby they acknowledged their equality with them, and agreed that these should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the circumcision; as judging it most agreeable to the mind of Christ, and most conducive to the interest of Christianity, so to divide their work. And thus this meeting ended in an entire harmony and agreement; they approved both Paul's doctrine and conduct, they were fully satisfied in him, and heartily embraced him as an apostle of Christ; and had nothing further to add, only that they would remember the poor, which of his own accord he was very forward to do. The Christians of Judea were at that time labouring under great wants and difficulties, and the apostles, out of their compassion to them, and concern for them, recommend their case to Paul, that he should use his interest with the Gentile churches to procure a supply for them. This was but a reasonable request, for if the Gentiles were made partakers of their spiritual things, it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things; as Rom. xv. 17. And he very readily falls in with it, whereby he shewed his charitable and catholic disposition; how ready he was to own the Jewish converts as brethren, though many of them could scarce allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles; and that mere difference of opinion was no reason with him why he should not endeavour to relieve and help them. And herein he has given us an excellent pattern of Christian charity, and has taught us that we should by no means confine it to those that are just of the same sentiments with us; but be ready to extend it to all whom we have reason to look upon as the disciples of Christ.

11. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? 15. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law; but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

From the account which Paul gives of what passed between him and the other apostles at Jerusalem, the Galatians might easily discern, both the falshood of what his enemies had insinuated against him, and their own folly and weakness in departing from that gospel which he had preached to them. But to give the greater weight to what he had already said, and more fully to fortify them against the insinuations of the judaizing teachers, he acquaints them with another interview which he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch, and what passed between them there, ver. 11—15. Antioch was one of the chief churches of the Gentile Christians, as Jerusalem was of those Christians that turned from Judaism to the faith of Christ. There is no colour of reason for the supposition that Peter was bishop of Antioch. If he had, surely Paul would not have withstood him in his own church as we here find he did; but on the contrary, it is here spoken of as an occasional visit which he made thither. In their other meeting there had been a good harmony and agreement. Peter and the other apostles had both acknowledged Paul's commission, and approved his doctrine, and they parted very good friends. But in this Paul finds himself obliged to oppose Peter, for he was to be blamed; a plain evidence that he was not inferior to him, and consequently of the weakness of the Pope's pretence to supremacy and infallibility, as the successor of Peter. Here we may,

(1.) Observe Peter's fault. When he came among the Gentile churches, he complied with them, and did eat with them, though they were not circumcised; agreeably to the instructions which were given in particular to him, Acts x. when he was warned by the heavenly vision, to call nothing common or unclean. But when there came some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, he grew more shy of the Gentiles, only to humour them of the circumcision, and for fear of giving them offence, which doubtless was to the great grief and discouragement of the Gentile churches. Then he withdrew and separated himself, and his fault had an ill influence upon others, for the other Jews also dissembled with him: though before they might be better disposed, yet now from this example they took on them to scruple eating with the Gentiles, and pretended they could not in conscience do it, because they were not circumcised. And (would you think it?) Barnabas himself, one of the apostles of the Gentiles, and one that had been instrumental in planting and watering the churches of the Gentiles, was carried away with their dissimulation. Here note, (1.) The weakness and inconsistency of the best men when left to themselves, and how apt they are to fault in their duty to God, out of an undue regard to the pleasing of men. And (2.) The great force of bad examples, especially the examples of great men and good men, such as are in reputation for wisdom and honour.

(2.) The rebuke which Paul gave him for his fault. Notwithstanding Peter's character, yet, when he observes him thus behaving himself to the great prejudice both of the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, he is not afraid to reprove him for it. Paul stuck resolutely to his principles, when

when others faulted in theirs; he was as good a Jew as any of them; for he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews; but he would magnify his office as the apostle of the Gentiles, and therefore would not see them discouraged and trampled upon. "When he saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel," that they did not live up to that principle which the gospel taught, and which they had professed to own and embrace, viz. That by the death of Christ the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and the observation of the law of Moses was no longer in force. When he observed this, as Peter's offence was public, so he publicly reproved him for it; "he said unto him before them all, If thou being a Jew live after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Herein one part of his conduct was a contradiction to the other: for, if he who was a Jew, could himself sometimes dispense with the use of the ceremonial law, and live after the manner of the Gentiles; this shewed that he did not look upon the observation of it as still necessary, even for the Jews themselves; and therefore, that he could not consistently with his own practice impose it upon the Gentile Christians. And yet this Paul charges him with, yea, represents him as *compelling* the Gentiles to live as did the Jews, not by open force and violence; but this was the tendency of what he did; for it was in effect to signify this, that the Gentiles must comply with the Jews, or else not be admitted into Christian communion.

Paul having thus established his character and office, and sufficiently shewn that he was not inferior to any of the apostles, no not to Peter himself; from the account of the *reproof* he gave him, he takes occasion to speak of that great fundamental doctrine of the gospel, viz. That justification is only by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, (though some think all that he said to the end of the chapter, is what he said to Peter at Antioch,) which doctrine condemned Peter for his symbolizing with the Jews. For it was the principle of his religion, that the gospel is the instrument of our justification, and not the law; that he did very ill in countenancing them that kept up the law, and were for mixing it with faith in the business of our justification. This was the doctrine which Paul had preached among the Galatians, which he still adhered to, and which it is his great business in this epistle to mention and confirm. Now concerning this, Paul acquaints us, (1.) With the practice of the Jewish Christians themselves. *We*, says he, "Who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles;" even we that have been born and bred in the Jewish religion, and not among the impure Gentiles, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we ourselves have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." And if we have thought it necessary to seek justification by the faith of Christ, why then should we hamper ourselves with the law? What did we believe in Christ for? Was it not that we might be justified by the faith of Christ? And if so, is it not folly to go back to the law, and to expect to be justified either by the merit of moral works, or the influence of any ceremonial sacrifices or purifications? And if it would be wrong in us, who are Jews by nature, to return to the law, and expect justification by it, would it not be much more so to require this of the Gentiles, who were never subject to it? *since by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.* And to give the greater weight to this, he adds, ver. 17. "But if while we seek to be justified by Christ ourselves are also found sinners. Is Christ the minister of sin?" i. e. If while we seek justification by Christ alone, and teach others to do so, we ourselves are found giving countenance or indulgence to sin, or rather are accounted sinners of the Gentiles, and such as it is not fit to have communion with; unless we observe the law of Moses: *Is Christ the minister of sin?* Will it not follow that he is so, if he engages us to receive a doctrine that gives liberty to sin, or by which we are so far from being justified that we remain impure sinners, and unfit to be conversed with? This he intimates would be the consequence, but he rejects it with abhorrence. *God forbid*, says he, that we should entertain such a thought of Christ, or of his doctrine, that thereby he should direct us into a way of justification that is defective and ineffectual, and leave those that embrace it still unjustified, or that would give the least encouragement to sin and sinners. This would be very dishonourable to Christ, and it would be very injurious to them also. For, says he, ver. 18. *If I build again the things which I destroyed*; if I (or any other) who have taught the observation of the Mosaic law is not necessary to justification, should now by word or practice teach or intimate, that it is necessary, *I make myself a transgressor.* I own myself to be still an impure sinner, and to remain under the guilt of sin, notwithstanding my faith in Christ; or I shall be liable to be charged with deceit and prevarication, and acting inconsistently with myself. Thus does the apostle argue for the great doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, from the principles and practices of the Jewish Christians themselves, and from the consequences that would attend their departure from it; from whence it appeared that Peter and the other Jews were much in the wrong, for refusing to communicate with the Gentile Christians, and endeavouring to bring them under the bondage of the law.

(2.) He acquaints us what his own judgment and practice was.

(1.) *That he was dead to the law.* Whatever account others might make of it, yet for his part he was dead to it. He knew that the moral law denounced a curse against all that continued not in all things written therein to do them; and therefore he was dead to it, as to all hope of justification and salvation that way. And as for the ceremonial law, he also knew that was now antiquated and superseded by the coming of Christ; and therefore the substance being come, he had no longer any regard to the shadow. And he was thus dead to the law, *through the law itself*; it discovered itself to be at an end; by considering the law itself, he saw that justification was not to be expected by the works of it, since none could perform a perfect obedience to it, and that there was now no further need of the sacrifices and purifications of it, since they were done away in Christ, and a period was put to them by his offering up himself a sacrifice for us; and therefore the more he looked into it, the more he saw that there was no occasion for keeping up that regard to it, which the Jews pleaded for. But though he was thus dead to the law, yet he does not look upon himself as *without law*, he had renounced all hopes of justification by the works of it, and was unwilling any longer to continue under the bondage of it, but he was far from thinking himself discharged from his duty to God; on the contrary, he was dead to the law, *that he might live unto God.* The doctrine of the gospel, which he had embraced, instead of weakening the bond of duty upon him, did but the more strengthen and confirm it; and therefore though he was dead to law, yet it was only in order to his living a new and better life to God, Rom. vii. 4, 6. such a life as would be more agreeable and acceptable to God, than his observation of the Mosaic law could now be, viz. a life of faith in Christ, and under the influence thereof holiness and righteousness towards God. And agreeably hereunto he acquaints us,

(2.) That as he was dead to the law, so he was alive unto God, through Jesus Christ, ver. 20. *I am crucified with Christ*, &c. And here in his own person he gives us an excellent description of the mysterious life of a believer. (1.) *He is crucified*, and yet *he lives*; the old man is crucified, Rom. vi. 6. but the new man is living; he is dead to the world, and dead

to the law, and yet alive to God and Christ; sin is mortified, and grace quickened. (2.) *He lives*, and yet *not he*; this is strange, *I live*, and yet *not I*; he lives in the exercise of grace; he has the comforts and the triumphs of grace; and yet that grace is not from himself, but from another. Believers see themselves living in a state of dependence. (3.) *He is crucified with Christ*, and yet *Christ lives in him*; this results from his mystical union with Christ, by means of which he is interested in the death of Christ, so as by virtue of that to die unto sin; and yet interested in the life of Christ, so as by virtue of that to live unto God. (4.) *He lives in the flesh*, and yet *lives by faith*; to outward appearance he lives as other people do, his natural life is supported as others, but yet he hath a higher and nobler principle that supports and actuates him, viz. that of faith in Christ, and especially as eyeing the wonders of his love in giving himself for him; hence it is, that though he lives in the flesh, yet he does not live after the flesh. Note, They that have true faith do live by that faith; and the great thing which faith fastens upon is Christ's loving us, and giving himself for us. The great evidence of Christ's loving us, is his giving himself for us; and this is that we are chiefly concerned to mix faith with, in order to our living to him.

The apostle concludes this discourse with acquainting us, that by the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, which he asserted, and others opposed: he avoided two great difficulties, which the contrary opinion was loaded with, viz. (1.) *That he did not frustrate the grace of God*, which the doctrine of justification by the works of the law did, for as he argues, Rom. xi. 6. *If it be of works, it is no more of grace.* (2.) *That he did not frustrate the death of Christ*, whereas *if righteousness come by the law*, then it must follow *that Christ is dead in vain*; for if we look for salvation by the law of Moses, then we render the death of Christ needless; for to what purpose should he be appointed to die, if we might have been saved without it?

C H A P. III.

The apostle in this chapter, (1.) *Reproves the Galatians for their folly in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the faith of the gospel*; and endeavours, from several considerations, to impress them with a sense of it. (2.) *He proves the doctrine which he had reproved them for departing from*, viz. *that of justification by faith without the works of the law.* (1.) *From the example of Abraham's justification.* (2.) *From the nature and tenor of the law.* (3.) *From the express testimony of the Old Testament.* And, (4.) *From the stability of the covenant of God with Abraham.* And left any should hereafter say, Wherefore then serveth the law? He answers, (1.) *It was added because of transgressions.* (2.) *It was given to convince the world of the necessity of a Saviour.* (3.) *It was designed as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* And then he concludes the chapter, by acquainting us with the privilege of Christians under the gospel state.

1. **O** FOOLISH Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? 2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? 4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. 5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

The apostle is here dealing with those that having embraced the faith of Christ, yet still continued to seek for justification by the works of the law, i. e. who depended upon their own obedience to the moral precepts as their righteousness before God; and wherein that was defective, had recourse to the legal sacrifices and purifications to make it up. These he first sharply reproves, and then endeavours by the evidence of truth to convince them. And this is the right method, when we reprove any for a fault or an error, to convince them that it is an error, that it is a fault.

(1.) He reproves them, and the reproof is very close and warm: he calls them *foolish Galatians*, ver. 1. Though as Christians they were wisdom's children, yet as corrupt Christians they were foolish children. Yea, he asks, *Who hath bewitched you?* whereby he represents them as enchanted by the arts and snares of their seducing teachers, and so far deluded as to act very unlike themselves; and that wherein the folly and infatuation appeared, was, that *they did not obey the truth*, i. e. they did not adhere to the gospel way of justification, wherein they had been taught, and which they had professed to embrace. Note, 1. It is not enough to know the truth, and to say we believe it; but we must obey it too, we must heartily submit to it, and stedfastly abide by it. And, 2. That those are spiritually bewitched, who, when the truth as it is in Jesus is plainly set before them, will not thus obey it. Several things proved and aggravated the folly of these Christians.

(1.) *Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth as crucified among them*; that is, that they had the doctrine of the cross preached to them, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper administered among them, in both which Christ crucified had been set before them. Now, it was the greatest madness that could be for them, who had acquaintance with such sacred mysteries, and admittance to such great solemnities, not to obey the truth which was thus published to them, and signed and sealed in that ordinance. Note, The consideration of the honours and privileges we have been admitted to as Christians, should shame us out of the folly of apostacy and backslidings.

(2.) He appeals to the experiences they had of the working of the Spirit upon their souls, ver. 2. he puts them in mind, that upon their becoming Christians *they had received the Spirit*, that many of them at least had been made partakers, not only of the sanctifying influences, but of the miraculous gifts of the holy Spirit, which were eminent proofs of the truth of the Christian religion and the several doctrines of it, and especially of this, that justification is by Christ only, and not by the works of the law, which was one of the peculiar and fundamental principles of it. And to convince them of the folly of their departing from the doctrine, he desires to know how they came by these gifts and graces: was it *by the works of the law*, i. e. the preaching of the necessity of these in order to justification? This they could not say, for that doctrine had not then been preached to them, nor had they, as Gentiles, any pretence to justification that way. Or was it *by the hearing of faith*, i. e. the preaching of the doctrine of faith in Christ, as the only way of justification? This, if they would say the truth, they

they were obliged to own, and therefore must be very unreasonable if they should reject a doctrine, the good effects of which they had had such experience of. Note, 1. That it is usually by the ministry of the gospel that the spirit is communicated to persons. And, 2. That they are very unwise, who suffer themselves to be turned away from that ministry and doctrine which has been blessed to their spiritual advantage.

(3.) He calls upon them to consider their past and present conduct, and from thence to judge whether they were not acting very weakly and unreasonably, ver. 3, 4. he tells them, that *they had begun in the Spirit*, but now were seeking to be made perfect by the flesh; they had embraced the doctrine of the gospel, by means of which they had received the Spirit, and wherein only the true way of justification is revealed. And thus they had begun well; but now they were turning to the law, and expected to be advanced to higher degrees of perfection, by adding the observation of it to faith in Christ, in order to their justification, which could end in nothing but their shame and disappointment; for this instead of being an improvement upon the gospel, was really a perversion of it; and while they sought to be justified in this way, they were so far from being more perfect Christians, that they were more in danger of becoming no Christians at all; hereby they were pulling down with one hand what they had built with the other, and undoing what they had hitherto done in Christianity. Yea, he further puts them in mind, that they had not only embraced the Christian doctrine, but suffered for it too; and therefore their folly would be the more aggravated if now they should desert it: for in this case all that they had suffered would be in vain, it would appear that they had been foolish in suffering for what they now deserted, and their sufferings would be altogether in vain, and of no advantage to them. Note, 1. It is the folly of apostates, that they lose the benefit of all they have done in religion, or suffered for it. And, 2. That it is very sad for any to live in an age of services and sufferings, of sabbaths, sermons, and sacraments, in vain; in this case former righteousness shall not be mentioned.

(4.) He puts them in mind, that they had had ministers among them, (and particularly himself) who came with a divine seal and commission: for they had ministered the spirit to them, and wrought miracles among them; And he appeals to them whether they did it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith; whether the doctrine that was preached by them, and confirmed by the miraculous gifts and operations of the Spirit, was that of justification by the works of the law, or by the faith of Christ; they very well knew that it was not the former, but the latter; and therefore must needs be inexcusable in forsaking a doctrine which had been so signally owned and attested, and exchanging it for one that had received no such attestations.

6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. 10. For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them, shall live in them. 13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; 14. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but of a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth nor addeth thereto. 16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to thy seed, which is Christ. 17. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

The apostle having reprov'd the Galatians for their not obeying the truth, and endeavour'd to impress them with a sense of their folly herein; in these verses he largely proves the doctrine which he had reprov'd them for the rejecting of; namely, that of justification by faith without the works of the law. This he does several ways.

(1.) From the example of Abraham's justification. Which argument this same apostle uses, Rom. iv. "Abraham believed God, and that was accounted to him for righteousness," ver. 6. i. e. his faith fastened on the word and promise of God, and upon his believing he was owned and accepted of God as a righteous man: and as on this account he is represented as the Father of the faithful: so the apostle would have us to know, that they who are of faith are the children of Abraham, ver. 7. not according to the flesh, but according to the promise; and consequently that they are justified in the same way that he was. Abraham was justified by faith and so are they. And to confirm this, the apostle acquaints us, that the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, had a reference hereunto, ver. 8. The scripture is said to foresee, because he that indited the scripture did foresee that God would justify the heathen world in the way of faith: and therefore in Abraham, i. e. in the seed of Abraham, which is Christ, not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also should be blessed; not only blessed in the seed of Abraham, but blessed as Abraham was, being justified as he was. This the apostle calls *preaching the gospel to Abraham*; and from thence infers, ver. 9. that they who are of faith, i. e. true believers, of what nation soever they be, are blessed with faithful Abraham. They are blessed with Abraham the father of the faithful by the promise made to him, and therefore by faith as he was. It was through faith in the

promise of God that he was blessed, and it is only in the same way that others obtain this privilege.

(2.) He shews that we cannot be justified but by faith fastening on the gospel, because the law condemns us. If we put ourselves upon trial in that court, and stand to the sentence of it, we are certainly cast, and lost, and undone; for as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, i. e. as many as depend upon the merit of their own works as their righteousness, that plead not guilty, and insist upon their own justification, the curse will certainly go against them; for it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, ver. 10. and Deut. xxvii. 26. The condition of life by the law is perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; the language of it is, *Do this and live*; or as ver. 12. *The man that doth them shall live in them*; and for every failure herein the law denounces a curse. Unless our obedience be universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be perpetual too: if in any instance at any time we fail and come short, we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is wrath revealed, and ruin threatened. It is a separation unto all evil, and this is in full force, power, and virtue against all sinners, and therefore against all men; for all have sinned and are become guilty before God. And if as transgressors of the law, we are under the curse of it, it must be a vain thing to look for justification by it. But though this is not to be expected from the law; yet the apostle afterwards acquaints us, that there is a way open to our escaping this curse, and regaining the favour of God, viz. through faith in Christ, who, as he says, ver. 13. *has redeemed us from the curse of the law*, &c. A strange method it was which Christ took to redeem us from the curse of the law: it was by his being himself made a curse for us; being made sin for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for the present under that infamous token of the divine displeasure, which the law of Moses had put a particular brand upon, Deut. xxi. 23. And the design of this was, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. That all who believed in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, might become heirs of Abraham's blessing, and particularly of that great promise of the Spirit, which was peculiarly reserved for the times of the gospel. And from hence it appeared, that it was not by putting themselves under the law, but by faith in Christ, that they became the people of God and heirs of the promise. Here note, (1.) The misery which as sinners we were sunk into; we were under the curse and condemnation of the law. (2.) The love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us; he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law. (3.) The happy prospect which we now have through him, not only of escaping the curse but of inheriting the blessing. And, (4.) That it is only through faith in him, that we can hope to obtain this favour.

(3.) To prove that justification is by faith, and not by the works of the law: the apostle alleges the express testimony of the Old Testament, ver. 11. The place referred to is, Habak. ii. 4. where it is said, *The just shall live by faith*; it is again quoted, Rom. i. 17. and Heb. x. 38. And the design of it is to shew, that they are only such as are just or righteous, who do truly live, who are freed from death and wrath, and restored into a state of life in the favour of God; and that it is only through faith, that persons become righteous, and as such obtain this life and happiness; that they are accepted of God and enabled to live to him now, and are entitled to an eternal life in the enjoyment of him hereafter. And from hence the apostle says, *it is evident, that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God*. Whatever he may be in the account of others, yet he is not so in the sight of God, for the law is not of faith; that says nothing concerning faith in the business of justification, nor does it give life to those that believe; but the language of it is, *That the man that doth them shall live in them*, as Lev. xviii. 5. It requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and therefore now can by no means be the rule of our justification: and this argument of the apostle's may give us occasion to remark, That justification by faith is no new doctrine, but what was established and taught in the church of God, long before the times of the gospel. Yea, it is the only way wherein any sinners ever were or can be justified.

(4.) To this purpose the apostle urges the stability of the covenant which God made with Abraham, which was not vacated or disannulled by the giving of the law to Moses, ver. 15, &c. Faith had the precedence of the law, for Abraham was justified by faith. It was a promise that he built upon, and promises are the proper objects of faith. God entered into covenant with Abraham, ver. 8. and this covenant was firm and steady: even men's covenants are so, and therefore much more his. When a deed is executed, or articles of agreement sealed, both parties are bound, and it is too late then to settle things otherwise; and therefore it is not to be supposed that by the subsequent law, the covenant of God should be vacated. The original word *berith* signifies both a covenant and a testament. Now the promise made to Abraham was rather a testament than a covenant. When a testament is become of force by the death of the testator, it is not capable of being altered; and therefore the promise that was given to Abraham, being of the nature of a testament, it remains firm and unalterable. But if it should be said, that a grant or claim may be deserted for want of persons to claim the benefit of it, therefore ver. 16. he shews, that there is no danger of that in this case. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, but the covenant is made with Abraham and his seed. And he gives as a very surprising exposition of that. We would have thought it had been meant only of the people of the Jews. Nay, saith the apostle, it is in the singular number, and points at a single person, *that seed is Christ*. So that the covenant is still in force; for Christ abideth for ever in his person, and in his spiritual seed, that are his by faith. And if it be objected, that the law which was given by Moses, did disannul this covenant, because that insisted so much upon works, and there was so little in it of faith, or of the promised Messiah; he answers, that the subsequent law could not disannul the precedent covenant or promise: ver. 18. *If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but*, says he, *God gave it to Abraham by promise*; and therefore, it would be inconsistent with his holiness, wisdom, and faithfulness, by any subsequent act to set aside the promise, and so to alter the way of justification, which he had thus established. If the inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, and thereby entailed upon his spiritual seed, we may be sure God would not retract that promise; for he is not a man that he should repent.

19. Wherefore then serveth the law? it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. 21. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,

fin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26. For ye all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The apostle having just before been speaking of the promise made to Abraham, and representing that as the rule of our justification and not the law, lest they should think he did too much derogate from the law, and render it altogether useless, he from thence takes occasion to discourse of the design and tendency of it, and to acquaint us for what purposes it was given. It might be asked, if that promise was sufficient for salvation, wherefore then serveth the law? or why did God give the law by Moses? To this he answers:

1. That the law was added because of transgressions, ver. 19. It was not designed to disannul the promise, and to establish a different way of justification from that which was settled by the promise: But it was added to it, annexed on purpose to be subservient to it; and it was so because of transgressions. The Israelites, though they were chosen to be God's peculiar people, yet were sinners as well as others, and therefore the law was given to convince them of their sin, and of their obligation to the divine discipline on the account of it; for by the law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20. and the law entered that sin might abound, Rom. v. 20. And it was also intended to restrain them from the commission of sin, to put an awe upon their minds, and be a curb upon their lusts, that they should not run into that excess of riot which they were naturally inclined to; and yet at the same time it was designed to direct them unto the true and only way whereby sin was to be expiated, and wherein they might obtain the pardon of it, viz. through the death and sacrifice of Christ, which was the special use for which the law of sacrifices and purifications was given.

And the apostle adds, that the law was given for this purpose, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made, i. e. either till Christ should come, the principal seed referred to in the promise, as he had before shewn, or till the gospel dispensation should take place, when Jews and Gentiles, without distinction, should, upon believing, become the seed of Abraham. The law was added because of transgressions, till this fulness of time, or this complete dispensation was come. But when the seed was come, and a fuller discovery of divine grace in the promise was made, then the law, as given by Moses, was to cease; that covenant being found faulty, was to give place to another, and a better, Heb. viii. 7, 8. And though the law, considered as the law of nature, is always in force, and still continues to be of use, to convince men of sin, and to restrain them from it; yet we are now longer under the bondage and terror of that legal covenant. The law then was not intended to discover another way of justification different from that revealed by the promise, but only to lead men to see their need of the promise, by shewing them the insufficiency of it, and to point them to Christ, through whom alone they could be pardoned and justified.

And as a further proof that the law was not designed to vacate the promise, the apostle adds, that it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. It was given to different persons, and in a different manner from the promise, and therefore for different purposes. The promise was made to Abraham, and all his spiritual seed, including believers of all nations, even of the Gentiles as well as Jews: but the law was given to the Israelites as a peculiar people, and separated from the rest of the world. And whereas the promise was given immediately by God himself, the law was given by the ministry of angels, and the hand of a mediator. And from hence it appeared that the law could not be designed to set aside the promise; for, ver. 20. A mediator is not a mediator of one, i. e. of one part only, but God in one, i. e. but one party in the promise or covenant made with Abraham: and therefore it is not to be supposed, that by a transaction which passed only between him and the nation of the Jews, he should make void a promise which he had long before made to Abraham and all his spiritual seed, whether Jews or Gentiles. This would not have been consistent with his wisdom, or with his truth and faithfulness. Moses was only a mediator between God and the Israelites, not between God and the spiritual seed of Abraham, and therefore the law that was given by him could not affect the promise made to them, much less be subversive of it.

2. The law was given to convince men of the necessity of a Saviour. The apostle asks, ver. 21. as what some might be ready to object: is the law then against the promises of God? do they really clash and interfere with each other? or do you not set the covenant with Abraham, and the law of Moses at variance with one another? To this he answers, God forbid; he was far from entertaining such a thought, nor could it be inferred from what he had said; the law is by no means inconsistent with the promise, but subservient to it, as the design of it is to discover men's transgressions, and to shew them the need they have of a better righteousness than that of the law. That consequence would much rather follow from their doctrine than from his; for if there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law; and in that case the promise would have been superseded, and rendered useless. But that in our present state could not be, for the scripture hath concluded all under sin, ver. 22. or declared that all, both Jew and Gentile, are in a state of guilt, and therefore unable to attain to righteousness and justification by the works of the law. That discovered their wounds, but could not afford them a remedy. It shewed that they were guilty, because it appointed sacrifices and purifications, which were manifestly insufficient to take away sin; and therefore the great design of it was, that the promise by faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe: that being convinced of their guilt, and the insufficiency of the law to effect a righteousness for them, they might be persuaded to believe on Christ, and to obtain the benefit of the promise.

3. The law was designed for a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, ver. 24. In the foregoing verse, the apostle acquaints us with the state of the Jews under the Mosaic economy: that before faith came, or before Christ appeared, and the doctrine of justification by faith in him was more fully discovered, they were kept under the law, obliged on severe penalties to a strict observance of the various precepts of it; and at that time they were

shut up, held under the terror and discipline of it as prisoners in a state of confinement: and the design of this was, that hereby they might be disposed more readily to embrace the faith which should afterwards be revealed, or be persuaded to accept Christ when he came into the world, and to fall in with that better dispensation he was to introduce, whereby they were to be freed from that bondage and servitude, and brought into a state of greater light and liberty. Now in that state he tells them, that the law was their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. As it declared the mind and will of God concerning them, and at the same time denounced a curse against them for every failure in their duty; so it was proper to convince them of the undone and lost condition in themselves, and to let them see the weakness and insufficiency of their own righteousness to recommend them to God. And as it obliged them to a variety of sacrifices, &c. which though they could not of themselves take away sin, yet were typical of Christ, and of the great sacrifice which he was to offer up for the expiation of it; so it directed them, (though in a more dark and obscure manner) to him as their only relief and refuge. And thus it was their schoolmaster, to instruct and govern them in their state of minority, or as the word *παιδαγωγός* most properly signifies their servant, to lead and conduct them to Christ, (as children were wont to be led to school by those servants who had the care of them) that they might be more fully instructed by him as their schoolmaster, in the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in him, and which he was appointed to give the fullest and clearest discoveries of. But lest it should be said, if the law was of this use and service under the Jewish, why may it not continue to be so under the Christian state too; the apostle adds, ver. 25. that after faith is come, and the gospel dispensation had taken place, under which Christ, and the way of pardon and life through faith in him is set in the clearest light; We are no longer under a schoolmaster, we have no such need of the law to direct us to him, as there was then.

Thus the apostle acquaints us for what uses and purposes the law served; and from what he says concerning this matter, we may observe, 1. The goodness of God to his people of old, in giving the law to them: for though in comparison of the gospel-state, it was a dispensation of darkness and terror, yet it furnished them with sufficient means and helps, both to direct them in their duty to God, and to encourage their hopes in him. 2. The great fault and folly of the Jews, in mistaking the design of the law and abusing it to a very different purpose from that which God intended in the giving of it: for they expected to be justified by the works of it; whereas it was never designed to be the rule of their justification, but only a means of convincing them of their guilt and of their need of a Saviour, and of directing them to Christ and faith in him, as the only way of obtaining this privilege. See Rom. ix. 31, 32. and chap. x. 3, 4. 3. The great advantage of the gospel-state above the legal, under which we not only enjoy a clearer discovery of divine grace and mercy than was afforded to the Jews of old, but are also freed from that state of bondage and terror under which they were held. We are not now treated as children in a state of minority, but as sons grown up to a full age, who are admitted to greater freedoms and inflated in larger privileges than they were. This the apostle enlarges upon in the following verses.

For having shewn for what intent the law was given, in the close of the chapter he acquaints us with our privilege by Christ: where he particularly declares,

1. That we are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, ver. 26. And here may observe, (1.) The great and excellent privilege which under the gospel real Christians enjoy, they are the children of God; they are no longer accounted servants but sons: they are not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints as the Jews were, but are allowed a nearer and freer access to God than was granted to them; yea, they are admitted into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of his children. (2.) How they came to obtain this privilege, and that is by faith in Christ Jesus; having accepted him as their Lord and Saviour, and relying on him alone for justification and salvation, they are hereupon admitted into this happy relation to God, and are entitled to the privileges of it: for John i. 12. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

And this faith in Christ, whereby they became the children of God, he acquaints us, ver. 27. was what they professed in baptism; for he adds, as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; having in baptism professed their faith in him, they were thereby devoted to him, and had, as it were, put on his livery, and declared themselves to be his servants and disciples; and being thus become the members of Christ, they were through him owned and accounted as the children of God. Here note, (1.) That baptism is now the solemn rite of our admission into the Christian church, as circumcision was into that of the Jews. Our Lord Jesus appointed it to be so in the commission he gave to his apostles, Matt. xxviii. 19. and accordingly it was their practice to baptize those whom they had discipleship to the Christian faith; and perhaps the apostle might take notice of their baptism here, and of their becoming the children of God through faith in Christ professed therein, to obviate a farther objection, which the false teachers might be apt to urge in favour of circumcision. They might be ready to say, though it should be allowed that the law, as given at mount Sinai, were abrogated by the coming of Christ the promised seed; yet what reason was there that circumcision should be set aside too, when that was given to Abraham together with the promise, and long before the giving of the law of Moses? but this difficulty is sufficiently removed, when the apostles say, that they who are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ: for from thence it appears, that under the gospel, baptism comes in the room of circumcision, and that they who by baptism are devoted to Christ, and do sincerely believe in him, are to all intents and purposes as much admitted into privileges of the Christian state, as the Jews were by circumcision into those of the legal, Phil. iii. 3. and therefore there was no reason why the use of that should still be continued. Note, (2.) That in our baptism we put on Christ, therein we profess our discipleship to him, and are obliged to behave ourselves as his faithful servants: being baptized into Christ we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so in conformity thereunto we should die unto sin, and walk in newness of life, Rom. vi. 3, 4. and it would be of great advantage to us, did we oftener remember this.

2. That this privilege of being the children of God, and of being by baptism devoted to Christ, is now enjoyed in common by all real Christians. The law indeed made a difference between Jew and Greek, giving the Jews on many accounts the pre-eminence: that also made a difference between bond and free, master and servant, and between male and female, the males being circumcised; but it is not so now, they all stand on the same level, and are all one in Christ Jesus: as the one is not accepted on the account of any rational or personal advantage he may enjoy above the other, so neither is the other rejected for the want of them: but all that sincerely believe on Christ, of what nation, or sex, or condition soever they be, are accepted of him, and become the children of God through faith in him.

3. That being Christ's we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise

promise. Their judaizing teachers would make them believe, that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved: No, says the apostle, there is no need of that; for *if ye be Christ's*, if you sincerely believe in him, who is the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, you thereby become the true seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and as such are heirs according to the promise, and consequently are entitled to the great blessings and privileges of it.

And therefore upon the whole, since it appeared that justification was not to be attained by the works of the law, but only by faith in Christ, and that the law of Moses was a temporary institution, and was given for such purposes as were only subservient to, and not subversive of the promise, and that now under the gospel Christians enjoy much greater and better privileges than the Jews did under that dispensation; it must needs follow that they were very unreasonable and unwise, in hearkening to those who at once endeavoured to deprive them of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

C H A P. IV.

The apostle in this chapter is still carrying on the same general design as in the former, viz. to recover those Christians from the impressions made upon them by the judaizing teachers, and to represent their weakness and folly in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the gospel doctrine of justification, and to be deprived of their freedom from the bondage of the law of Moses. To this purpose he makes use of various considerations, such as, (1.) The great excellence of the gospel state above the legal, ver. 1—8. (2.) The happy change that was made in them at their conversion, ver. 8—12. (3.) The affliction they had for him, and his ministry, ver. 12—17. (4.) The character of the false teachers by whom they had been perverted, ver. 17, 18. (5.) The very tender affection he had for them, ver. 19, 20. (6.) The history of Isaac and Ishmael, by a comparison taken, from which he illustrates the difference between such as rested in Christ and such as trusted in the law. And in all these, as he uses great plainness and faithfulness with them, so he expresses the tenderest concern for them.

1. **N**OW I say, that the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be the Lord of all; 2. But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father. 3. Even so we when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; 4. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law. 5. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

In this chapter the apostle deals plainly with those that hearkened to the judaizing teachers who cried up the law of Moses in competition with the gospel of Christ, and endeavoured to bring them under the bondage of it; and to convince them of their folly and to rectify their mistake herein; in these verses he prosecutes the comparison of a child under age, which he had touched upon in the foregoing chapter; and from thence shews what great advantages we have now under the gospel above what they had under the law. And here,

(1.) He acquaints us with the state of the Old Testament church; it was like a child under age, and it was used accordingly, being kept in a state of darkness and bondage, in comparison of that greater light and liberty which we enjoy under the gospel. That was indeed a dispensation of grace, and yet it was comparatively a dispensation of darkness: for as the heir in his minority is under tutors and governors till the time appointed of his father, by whom he is educated and instructed in those things which at present he knows little the meaning of, though afterwards they are likely to be of great use to him; so it was with the Old Testament church, the Mosaic economy which they were under was what they could not fully understand the meaning of; for as the apostle says, 2 Cor. iii. 13. *They could not stedfastly look to the end of that which was abolished.* But to the church, when grown up to maturity in gospel days, it becomes of great use. And as that was a dispensation of darkness, so of bondage too; for they were in bondage under the elements of the world, being tied to a great number of burdensome rites and observances, by which, as by a kind of first rudiments, they were taught and instructed, and whereby they were kept in a state of subjection, like a child under tutors and governors. The church then lay more under the character of a servant, being obliged to do every thing according to the command of God, without being fully acquainted with the reason of it; but the service under the gospel appears to be more reasonable than that was. The time appointed of the Father being come, when the church was to arrive at its full age, now that darkness and bondage under which it before lay is removed, and we are under a dispensation of greater light and liberty.

(2.) He acquaints us with the much happier state of Christians under the gospel dispensation, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7. *When the fulness of time was come*, the time appointed of the Father, when he would put an end to the legal dispensation, and set up another and a better in the room of it. *He sent forth his Son, &c.* The person who was employed to introduce this new dispensation was no other than the Son of God himself, the only begotten of the Father; who, as he had been prophesied of, and promised from the foundation of the world, so in due time was manifested for this purpose. He, in pursuance of the great design he had undertaken, submitted to be made of a woman: there is his incarnation, and to be made under the law, there is his subjection. He who was truly God, yet for our sakes became man: and he who was Lord over all, yet consented to come into a state of subjection, and to take upon him the form of a servant; and one great end of all this was, *To redeem them that were under the law*; to save us from that intolerable yoke, and to appoint gospel-ordinances more rational and easy. He had indeed something more and greater in his view, in coming into the world, than merely to deliver us from the bondage of the ceremonial law; for he came in our nature, and consented to suffer and die for us; that hereby he might redeem us from the wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law, which as sinners we all lay under. But that was one end of it, and a mercy reserved to be bestowed at the time of his manifestation; then the more servile state of the church was to come to a period, and a better to succeed in the place of it; for he was sent to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons, that we might no longer be accounted

and treated as servants, but as sons grown up to maturity, who are allowed greater freedoms, and admitted to larger privileges than while they were under tutors and governors. This the course of the apostle's argument leads us to take notice of, as one thing intended by this expression, though no doubt it may also be understood as signifying that gracious adoption which the gospel so often speaks of as the privilege of those who believe in Christ. Israel was God's son, his first born, Rom. ix. 4. But now under the gospel particular believers receive the adoption; and as an earnest and evidence of it, they have together therewith the Spirit of adoption, putting them upon the duty of prayer, and enabling them in prayer to eye God as a Father; for as it follows, ver. 6. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And hereupon, ver. 7. the apostle concludes this argument, by adding, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son then an heir of God through Christ;" i. e. Now under the gospel state we are no longer under the servitude of the law, but upon our believing in Christ become the sons of God; we are thereupon accepted of him, and adopted by him; and being the sons, we are also heirs of God, and are entitled to the heavenly inheritance, as he also reasons, Rom. viii. 17. And therefore it must needs be the greatest weakness and folly to turn back to the law, and to seek justification by the works of it. From what the apostle says in these verses we may observe,

(1.) The wonders of divine love and mercy towards us, particularly of God the Father in sending his Son into the world to redeem and save us; of the Son of God in submitting so low, and suffering so much for us in pursuance of that design; and of the Holy Spirit, in condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers for such gracious purposes.

(2.) The great and invaluable advantages which Christians enjoy under the gospel: for, (1.) We receive the adoption of sons. Whence note, That it is the great privilege which believers have through Christ, that they are adopted children of the God of heaven. We who by nature are children of wrath and disobedience, are become by grace children of love. (2.) We receive the Spirit of adoption. Note, (1.) That all that have the privilege of adoption, have the spirit of adoption; all that are received into the number, partake of the nature of the children of God, for he will have all his children to resemble him. (2.) That the Spirit of adoption is always the Spirit of prayer, and it is our duty in prayer to eye God as a Father. Christ hath taught us in prayer to eye God as our Father in heaven. (3.) If we are his sons, then his heirs. It is not so among men, with whom the eldest son is heir; but all God's children are heirs; they that have the nature of sons shall have the inheritance of sons.

8. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9. But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10. Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

In these verses the apostle puts them in mind of what they were before their conversion to the faith of Christ, and what a blessed change their conversion had made upon them; and from thence endeavours to convince them of the great weakness in hearkening to them that would bring them under the bondage of the law of Moses.

(1.) He reminds them of their past state and behaviour, and what they were before the gospel was preached to them; then *they knew not God*, they were grossly ignorant of the true God, and the way wherein he is to be worshipped: and at that time they were under the worst of slaveries, for *they did service to them which were by nature no gods*; they were employed in a great number of superstitious and idolatrous services to those who, though they were accounted gods, yet were really no gods, but mere creatures, and perhaps of their own making, and therefore were utterly unable to hear and help them. Note, (1.) That those who are ignorant of the true God cannot but be inclined to false gods: they who forsake the god that made the world, rather than be without gods, worshipped such as they themselves made. (2.) That religious worship is due to none but to him who is by nature God; for when the apostle blames the doing service to such as by nature were no gods, he plainly shews, that he only who is by nature God, is the proper object of our religious worship.

(2.) He calls upon them to consider the happy change that was made in them by the preaching of the gospel among them. Now *they that had known God*, they were brought to the knowledge of the true God and of his Son Jesus Christ, whereby they were recovered out of that ignorance and bondage under which they before lay, or rather were known of God; this happy change in their state, whereby they were turned from idols to the living God, and through Christ had received the adoption of sons, was not owing to themselves, but to him. It was the effect of his free and rich grace towards them, and as such they ought to account it; and therefore hereby they were laid under the greater obligation to adhere to the liberty wherewith he had made them free. Note, that all our acquaintance with God begins with him, we know him, because we are known of him.

(3.) From hence he infers the unreasonableness and madness of their suffering themselves to be brought again into a state of bondage; he speaks of it with surprise and deep concern of mind, that such as they should do so, *How turn ye again, &c.* says he, ver. 9. how is it that you, who have been taught to worship God in the gospel way, should now be persuaded to comply with the ceremonial way of worship? that you, who have been acquainted with a dispensation of light, liberty, and love, as that of the gospel is, should now submit to a dispensation of darkness, and bondage, and terror, as that of the law is? this they had the less reason for, since they had never been under the law of Moses, as the Jews had been; and therefore on this account they were more inexcusable than the Jews themselves, who might be supposed to have some fondness for that which had been so long standing among them. Besides what they suffered themselves to be brought into bondage to, were but *weak and beggarly elements*, such things as had no power in them to cleanse the soul, or to afford any solid satisfaction in the mind, and which were only designed for that state of pupillage under which the church had been, but which was now come to a period: and therefore their weakness and folly was the more aggravated in submitting to them, and in symbolizing with the Jews in observing their various festivals, here signified by *days, and months, and times and years.* Here note, (1.) That it is possible for those who have made great professions of religion to be afterwards drawn into very great defections from the purity and simplicity of it, for this was the case of these Christians. And, (2.) That the more mercy God has shewn to any in bringing them into an acquaintance with the gospel, and the liberties and privileges of it, the greater is their sin and folly in suffering themselves to be deprived of them;

them; for this the apostle lays a special stress upon that after they had known God, or rather were known of him, they desired to be in bondage under the weak and beggarly elements of the law.

(4.) Hereupon he expresses his fears concerning them, *lest he had bestowed on them labour in vain*. He had been at a great deal of pains about them, in preaching the gospel to them, and endeavouring to confirm them in the faith and liberty of it; but now they were giving up these, and thereby rendering his labour among them fruitless and ineffectual, and this he could not but be deeply affected with the thoughts of. Note, 1. That a great deal of the labour of faithful ministers is labour in vain, and that when it is so, it cannot but be a great grief to those who desire the salvation of souls. Note, 2. That the labour of ministers is in vain upon those that begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, who, though they seem to set out well, yet afterwards turn aside from the way of the gospel. Note, 3. That those will have a great deal to answer for upon whom the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ bestow labour in vain.

12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. 13. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preach the gospel unto you at the first. 14. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

That these Christians might be the more ashamed of their defection from the truth of the gospel which Paul had preached to them, he here reminds them of the great affection they formerly had for him and his ministry, and puts them upon considering how very inexcusable their present behaviour was to what they then professed. And here we may observe,

1. How affectionately he addresses himself to them, he styles them *brethren*, though he knew their hearts were in a great measure alienated from him. He desires that all resentments might be laid aside, and that they would bear the same temper of mind towards him which he did to them: he would have them to be as he was, for he was as they were, and moreover tells them that *they had not injured him at all*. He had no quarrel with them upon his own account; though in blaming their conduct, he had expressed himself with some warmth and concern of mind, yet he assures them that was not owing to any kind of personal injury or affront, as they might be ready to think, but proceeded wholly from a zeal for the truth and purity of the gospel, and their welfare and happiness. Thus he endeavours to mollify their spirits towards him, that so they might be the better disposed to receive his admonitions he was giving them; and hereby teaches us, that in our reproving others, we should take care to convince them that our reproofs do not proceed from any private pique or resentment, but from a sincere regard to the honour of God and religion, and their truest welfare, for then they are like to be most successful, when they appear to be most interested.

2. How he magnifies their former affection to him, that hereby they might be the more ashamed of their present behaviour towards him. To this purpose, (1.) He puts them in mind of the difficulty under which he laboured when he came first among them. *Ye know, says he, how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first*. What this *infirmity of the flesh* was, which in the following words he expresses by *his temptation that was in the flesh*, though no doubt it was well known to these Christians to whom he wrote, yet now we can have no certain knowledge of it: some take it to have been the persecutions which he suffered for the gospel's sake; others to have been something in his person or manner of speaking, which might render his ministry less grateful and acceptable, referring to 2 Cor. x. 10. and to chap. xii. 7, 8, 9. But whatever it was, it seems it made no impression on them to his disadvantage. For, (2.) He takes notice, that notwithstanding this is his infirmity, which might possibly lessen him in the esteem of some others, yet they did not *despise or reject* him on the account of it, but on the contrary *received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*; they showed a great deal of respect to him; he was a welcome messenger to them, even as though an angel of God or Jesus Christ himself had preached to them. Yea, so great was their esteem of him, that if it would have been any advantage to him, *they could have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him*. Note, How uncertain the respects of people are, how apt they are to change their minds, and how easily they are drawn into a contempt of those for whom they once had the greatest esteem and affection, so that they are ready to pluck out the eyes of those for whom they would before have plucked out their own. We should therefore labour to be accepted of God, for it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3.

3. How earnestly he expostulates with them hereupon. *Where is then, says he, the blessedness ye spake of?* As if he had said, time was when you expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction in the glad tidings of the gospel, and were very forward in pouring out your blessings upon me as the publisher of them; whence is it that ye are now so much altered, that you have so little relish of them, or respect for me? You once thought yourselves happy in receiving the gospel, have you now any reason to think otherwise? Note, That those that have left their first love, would do well to consider, where is now the blessedness they once spake of, what is become of that pleasure they used to take in communion with God, and in the company of his servants? And the more to impress upon them a just shame of their present conduct, he again asks, ver. 16. *Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?* How is it that I, who was heretofore your favourite, am now accounted your enemy? Can you pretend any other reason for it, than that I have told you the truth; endeavoured to acquaint you with, and to confirm you in the truth of the gospel; and if not, how unreasonable must your disaffection be? Note, 1. That it is no uncommon thing for men to account those their enemies who are really their best friends; for so to be sure these are, whether ministers or others, who tell them the truth, and deal freely and faithfully with them in matters relating to their eternal salvation, as the apostle now did with these Christians. 2. That ministers may sometimes create enemies to themselves by the faithful discharge of their duty: for this was the case of Paul, he was accounted their enemy for telling them the truth. 3. That yet ministers must not forbear speaking the truth, for fear of offending others and drawing their displeasure upon them: And, 4. That they may be easy in their own minds, when they are conscious to themselves, that if others are become their enemies, it is only for telling them the truth.

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17. They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. 18. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

The apostle is still carrying on the same design as in the foregoing verses, which was to convince the Galatians of their sin and folly in departing from the truth of the gospel; and having just before been expostulating with them about the change of their behaviour towards him who endeavoured to establish it in them, he here gives them the character of those false teachers who made it their business to draw them away from it; which if they would attend to, they might soon see how little reason they had to hearken to them: whatever apprehensions they might have of them, he tells them they were designing men, who were aiming to set up themselves, and who under their specious pretences were more consulting their own interest than theirs: *They zealously affect you*, says he, they show a mighty respect for you, and pretend a great deal of affection to you, but not well; they do it not with any good design, they are not sincere and upright in it, for they would exclude you, that you might affect them; that which they are chiefly aiming at is, to engage your affections to this; and in order to this, they are doing all they can to draw off your affections from me and from the truth, that so they may ingross you to themselves. Thus he assures them was their design, and therefore they must needs be very unwise in hearkening to them. Note, 1. That there may appear to be a great deal of zeal where yet there is but little truth and sincerity. Note, 2. That it is the usual way of seducers to insinuate themselves into people's affections, and by that means to draw them into their opinions. 3. That whatever pretences such may make, they have usually more regard to their own interest than that of others, and will not stick at raising the reputation of others, if that by any means they can raise their own. On this occasion the apostle gives us that excellent rule which we have, ver. 18. *It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*. What our translation renders in a good thing, some choose to render to a good man, and so consider the apostle as pointing to himself; and this sense they think is favoured both by the preceding context, and also by the words immediately following, *and not only when I am present with you*: Which may be as if he had said, Time was when you were zealously affected towards me, you once took me for a good man, and have now no reason to think otherwise of me; sure then it would become you to show the same regard to me now that I am absent from you, which you did when I was present with you. But if we adhere to our own translation, the apostle here furnishes us with a very good rule to direct and regulate us in the exercise of our zeal; and there are two things which to this purpose he may more especially recommend to us. (1.) That it be exercised only upon that which is good; for zeal is then only good, when it is in a good thing; they who are zealously affected to that which is evil, will thereby only do so much the more hurt. And (2.) That herein it be constant and steady. It is good to be zealous *always* in a good thing, not for a time only, or now and then, like the heat of an ague fit; but like the natural heat of the body, constant. And happy would it be for the church of Christ, if this rule was better observed among Christians.

19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth, again, until Christ be formed in you. 20. I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.

That the apostle might the better dispose these Christians to bear with him in the reproofs which he was obliged to give them, he here expresses his great affection to them, and the very tender concern he had for their welfare: he was not like them, one thing when among them, and another when absent from them; their disaffection to him had not removed his affection from them; but he still bore the same respect to them which he had formerly done; nor was he like their false teachers, who pretended a great deal of affection to them, when at the same time they were only consulting their own interest; but he had a sincere concern for their truest advantage; he sought not theirs, but them. They were too ready to account him their enemy, but he assures them that he was their friend; nay, not only so, but that he had the bowels of a parent towards them. He calls them *his children*, as he justly might, since he had been the instrument of their conversion to the Christian faith; yea, he styles them his *little children*, which as it denotes a greater degree of tenderness and affection to them, so it may possibly have a respect to their present behaviour; whereby they showed themselves too like little children, who are easily wrought upon by the arts and insinuations of others: He expresses his concern for them, and earnest desire of their welfare and soul-prosperity by the pains of a travelling woman, *he travailed in birth for them*; and the great thing that he was in so much pain about, and which he was so earnestly desirous of, was not so much that they might affect him, as that *Christ might be formed in them*; that they might become Christians indeed, and be more confirmed and established in the faith of the gospel. From whence we may note, 1. The very tender affection which faithful ministers bear towards those among whom they are employed; it is like that of the most affectionate parents to their little children. 2. That the chief thing they are longing, and even travelling in birth for on their account, is that Christ may be formed in them; not so much that they may gain their affections, much less that they make a prey of them, but that they may be renewed in the spirit of their minds, wrought into the image of Christ, and more fully settled and confirmed in the Christian faith and life: and how unreasonably must those people act, who suffer themselves to be prevailed upon to desert or dislike such ministers: 3. That Christ is not fully formed in men till they are brought off from trusting in their own righteousness, and made to rely only upon him and his righteousness.

As a further evidence of the affection and concern which the apostle had for these Christians, he adds, ver. 20. That he desired to be then present with them, he would be glad of an opportunity of being among them, and conversing with them, and that thereupon he might find occasion to change his voice towards them; for at present he stood in doubt of them, he knew not well what to think of them, he was not so fully acquainted with their state as to know how to accommodate himself to them; he was full of fears and jealousies concerning them, which was the reason of his writing to them in such a manner as he had done; but he would be glad to find that matters were better with them than he feared, and that he might have occasion to speak to them fair instead of thus reproving and chiding them. Note, That though ministers too often find it necessary to reprove those they have to do with, yet this is no grateful work to them, they had much rather there was no occasion for it, and are always glad when they can see reason to change their voice towards them.

21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22. For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman. 23. But he *who was* of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman *was* by promise. 24. Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27. For it is written, Rejoice, *thou barren that bearest not*; break forth and cry, *thou that travailest not*; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born after the Spirit*, even so *it is now*. 30. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. 31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

In these verses the apostle illustrates the difference between believers that rested in Christ only, and those Judaizers that trusted in the law, by a comparison taken from the story of Isaac and Ishmael. This he introduces in such a manner as was proper to strike and impress their minds, and to convince them of their great weakness in departing from the truth, and suffering themselves to be deprived of the liberty of the gospel. *Tell me, says he, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* He takes it for granted that they did hear the law, for among the Jews it was wont to be read in their public assemblies every sabbath-day, and since they were so very fond of being under it, he would have them duly to consider what is written therein, referring to what is recorded Gen. xvi. and chap. xxi. which if they would do, they might soon see how little reason they had for it. And here,

1. He sets before them the history itself, ver. 22, 23. *For it is written that Abraham had two sons, &c.* where he represents the different state and condition of these two sons of Abraham, that the one, viz. Ishmael, *was by a bond-maid*, and the other, viz. Isaac, *by a free-woman*; and that whereas the former *was born after the flesh*, or by the ordinary course of nature; the other *was by promise*, when in the course of nature there was no reason to expect that Sarah should have a son.

2. He acquaints them with the meaning and design of this history, or the use which he intended to make of it, ver. 24, 25, 26, 27. *These things, says he, are an allegory*, wherein, besides the literal and historical sense of the words, the Spirit of God might design to signify something farther to us, and that was, That these two, viz. Agar and Sarah, *are the two covenants*, or were intended to typify and prefigure the two different dispensations of the covenant: The former, viz. Agar, represented that which was given from mount Sinai, and *which gendereth to bondage*, which though it was a dispensation of grace, yet in comparison of the gospel state, was a dispensation of *bondage*, and became more so to the Jews through their mistake of the design of it, and expecting to be justified by the works of it. *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia*, mount Sinai was then called Agar by the Arabians; *and it answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children*, i. e. It justly represents the present state of the Jews, who continuing in their infidelity, and adhering to that covenant, are still in bondage with their children. But the other, viz. Sarah, was intended to prefigure Jerusalem *which is above*, or the state of Christians under the new and better dispensation of the covenant, which *is free* both from the curse of the moral, and the bondage of the ceremonial law, and *is the mother of us all*, a state into which all, both Jews and Gentiles, are admitted, upon their believing in Christ. And to this greater freedom and enlargement of the church under the gospel dispensation, which was typified by Sarah the mother of the promised seed, the apostle refers that of the prophet, Isa. liv. 1. where it is written, *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband*.

3. He applies the history thus explained to the present case, ver. 28. *Now we, brethren, says he, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise*. We Christians who have expected Christ, and rely upon him, and look for justification and salvation by him alone, as hereby we become the *spiritual* though we are not the *natural* seed of Abraham, so we are entitled to the promised inheritance, and interested in the blessings of it. But lest these Christians should be stumbled at the opposition they might meet with from the Jews, who were so tenacious of their law, as to be ready to persecute those that would not submit to it; he tells them that this was no more than what was pointed to in the type; for *as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*, they must expect it would be so now. But for their comfort in this case, he desires them to consider what the scripture saith, viz. Gen. xx. 10. *Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman*; Though the Judaizers should persecute and hate them, yet the issue would be that Judaism would sink and wither and perish: but true Christianity should flourish and last for ever. And then, as a general inference from the whole, or the sum of what he had said, he concludes, ver. 31. *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free*.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter the apostle comes to make application of his foregoing discourse: He begins it with a general caution, or exhortation, ver. 1. which he afterwards enforces by several considerations, from ver. 2. to the 13th. He then presses them to serious practical godliness, which would be the best antidote against the snares of their false teachers, particularly, 1. That they should not strive with one another, ver. 12, 14, 15. 2. That they would strive against sin; where he shews, (1.) That there is in every one a struggle between flesh and spirit, ver. 17. (2.) That it is our duty and interest, in this struggle, to side with the better part, ver. 16—18. (3.) He instances in the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified: and in the fruits of the Spirit,

which must be brought forth and cherished; and shews of what importance it is that they be so, ver. 19—24. And then concludes the chapter with a caution against pride and envy.

1. **S**TAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 2. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. 5. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. 7. Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? 8. This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. 9. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 10. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you, shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. 11. And I brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. 12. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

In the former part of this chapter the apostle cautions the Galatians to take heed of the Judaizing teachers, who endeavoured to bring them back under the bondage of the law: he had been arguing against them before, and had largely shewn how contrary the principles and spirit of those teachers were to the spirit of the gospel; and now this is as it were the general inference or application of all that discourse. Since it appeared, by what had been said, that we can only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the righteousness of the law; and that the law of Moses was no longer in force, nor Christians under any obligation to submit to it; therefore he would have them to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not be again entangled with the yoke of bondage*. Here observe,

1. That under the gospel we are enfranchised, we are brought into a state of *liberty*, wherein we are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the curse of the moral law; so that we are no longer tied to the observation of the one, nor tied up to the rigour of the other, which curses every one that continues not in all things written therein to do them, chap. iii. 10. 2. That we owe this liberty to Jesus Christ, it is he who *has made us free*; by his merits he has satisfied the demands of the broken law, and by his authority as a king, he has discharged us from the obligation of those carnal ordinances which were imposed on the Jews. And, 3. That it is therefore our duty to *stand fast in this liberty*, i. e. constantly and faithfully to adhere to the gospel and to the liberty of it, and that we do not suffer ourselves upon any considerations to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage, or persuaded to return back to the law of Moses. This is the general caution or exhortation, which in the following verses the apostle enforces by several reasons or arguments. As,

1. That their submitting to circumcision, and depending on the works of the law for righteousness, was an implicit contradiction of their faith as Christians, and a forfeiture of all their advantages by Jesus Christ, ver. 2, 3, 4. And here we may observe, (1.) With what solemnity the apostle asserts and declares this, *Behold, I Paul say unto you*, ver. 2. and he repeats it, ver. 3. *I testify unto you*, q. d. I, who have proved myself an apostle of Christ, and to have received my authority and instructions from him, do declare, and am ready to pawn my credit and reputation upon it, *That if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*, &c. Wherein he shews that what he was now saying, was not only a matter of great importance, but what might be most assuredly depended on: He was so far from being a preacher of circumcision, as some might report him to be, that he looked upon it as a matter of the greatest consequence, that they did not submit to it.

(2.) What it is which he so solemnly, and with so much assurance, declares, it is that *if they were circumcised Christ would profit them nothing*, &c. We are not to suppose that it is mere circumcision which the apostle is here speaking of, or that it was his design to say, that none who are circumcised could have any benefit by Christ; for all the Old Testament saints had been circumcised, and he himself had consented to the circumcising of Timothy. But he is to be understood as speaking of circumcision in the sense in which the Judaizing teachers did impose it, who taught that *except they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses they could not be saved*, Acts xv. 1. And that this is his meaning appears from ver. 4. where he expresses the same thing by their being *justified by the law*, or seeking justification by the works of it. Now in this case, if they submitted to circumcision in this sense, he declares that *Christ would profit them nothing*; that they were debtors to do the whole law, that *Christ was become of none effect to them*, and that they were fallen from grace. From all which expressions it appears, that thereby they renounced that way of justification which God had established; yea, that they laid themselves under an impossibility of being justified in his sight, for they became debtors to do the whole law, which required such an obedience as they were not capable of performing, and denounced a curse against those that failed in it; and therefore condemned, but could not justify them, and consequently that having thus revolted from Christ, and built their hopes upon the law. Christ would profit them nothing, nor be of any effect to them. Thus as by being circumcised they renounced their Christianity, so they cut themselves off from all advantage by Christ; and therefore there was the greatest reason why they should stedfastly adhere to that doctrine which they had embraced, and not suffer themselves to be brought under this yoke of bondage. Note, 1. That though Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, yet there are multitudes to whom he shall profit nothing. 2. That all those who seek to be justified by the law, do thereby render Christ of none effect to them; by building their hopes on the works of the law, they forfeit all their hopes from him; for he will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour.

2. To persuade them to steadfastness in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel, he sets before them his own example, and that of other Jews who had embraced the Christian religion, and acquaints them what their hopes were, viz. *That through the Spirit they were waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith*. Though they were Jews by nature, and had been bred up under the law, yet being through the Spirit, brought to the knowledge of Christ,

Christ, they had renounced all dependance on the works of the law, and looked for justification and salvation only by faith in him: And therefore it must needs be the greatest folly in them, who had never been under the law, to suffer themselves to be brought into subjection to it, and to found their hopes upon the works of it. Here we may observe, (1.) What it is that Christians are waiting for, it is *the hope of righteousness*, by which we are chiefly to understand the happiness of the other world: this is called the *hope of Christians*, as it is the great object of their hope, which they are above every thing else desiring and pursuing; and the *hope of righteousness*, as their hopes of it are founded on righteousness not their own, but that of our Lord Jesus, for though a life of righteousness is the way that leads to this happiness, yet it is the righteousness of Christ alone, which has procured it for us, and on the account of which we can expect to be brought to the possession of it. (2.) How they hope to obtain this happiness, and that is *by faith*, viz. in our Lord Jesus Christ, not by the works of the law, or any thing they can do to deserve it, but only by faith, receiving and relying upon him as the *Lord our righteousness*. It is in this way only that they expect either to be entitled to it here, or possessed of it hereafter. And, (3.) Whence it is that they are thus waiting for the hope of righteousness, it is *through the Spirit*; herein they act under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit. It is under his conduct and by his assistance, that they are both persuaded and enabled to believe in Christ, and to look for the hope of righteousness through him. And when the apostle thus represents the case of Christians, it is implied that if they expected to be justified and saved in any other way, they were like to meet with a disappointment, and therefore that they were greatly concerned to adhere to the doctrine of the gospel which they had embraced.

3. He argues from the nature and design of the Christian institution, which was to abolish the difference between Jew and Gentile, and to establish faith in Christ, as the way of our acceptance with God. He tells them, ver. 6. that in *Christ Jesus*, or under the gospel dispensation, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*. Though while the legal state lasted, there was a difference put between Jew and Greek, between those that were and those that were not circumcised, the former being admitted to those privileges of the church of God, from which the other were excluded; yet it was otherwise in the gospel state: Christ who is the *end of the law* being come, now it was neither here nor there whether a man was circumcised or uncircumcised, he was neither the better for the one, nor the worse for the other, nor would either the one or the other recommend him to God; and therefore as their judaizing teachers were very unreasonable in imposing circumcision upon them, and obliging them to observe the law of Moses, so they must needs be very unwise in submitting to them herein. But though he assures them that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision would avail to their acceptance with God, yet he acquaints them what would do so, and that is *faith which worketh by love*: such a faith in Christ as discovered itself to be true and genuine by a sincere love to God and our neighbour. If they had this, it mattered not whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, but without it nothing else would stand them in any stead. Note, 1. That no external privileges or profession will avail to our acceptance with God, without a sincere faith in our Lord Jesus. 2. That faith where it is true, is a working grace, it works by love, love to God, and love to our brethren; and faith thus working by love, is all in all in our Christianity.

4. To recover them from their back-slidings, and engage them to greater steadfastness for the future, he puts them in mind of their good beginnings, and calls upon them to consider whence it was that they were so much altered from what they had been, ver. 7. (1.) He tells them that *they did run well*: at their first setting out in Christianity they had behaved themselves very commendably, they had readily embraced the Christian religion, and discovering a becoming zeal in the ways and work of it; as in their baptism they were devoted to God, and had declared themselves the disciples of Christ, so their behaviour was agreeable to their character and profession. Note, 1. That the life of a Christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold on, if he would obtain the prize. 2. That it is not enough that we run in this race, by a profession of Christianity, but we must *run well* by living up to that profession. Thus these Christians had done for a while, but they had been obstructed in their progress, and were either turned out of the way, or at least made to flag and falter in it. Therefore, (2.) He asks them, and calls upon them to ask themselves, *Who did hinder them?* or how it came to pass that they did not hold on in the way wherein they had begun to run so well. He very well knew who they were, and what it was that hindered them; but he would have them to put the question to themselves, and seriously consider, whether they had any good reason to hearken to those that give them this disturbance, and whether what they offered was sufficient to justify them in their present conduct. Note, 1. That many who set out fair in religion and run well for a while, run within the bounds appointed for the race, and run with zeal and alacrity too, yet by some means or other are hindered in their progress, or turned out of the way. 2. That it concerns those who have run well, but now begin either to turn out of the way, or to tire in it, to enquire what it is that hinders them. Young converts must expect that Satan will be laying stumbling-blocks in their way, and doing all he can to divert them from the course they are in; but whenever they find themselves in danger of being turned out of it, they would do well to consider who it is that hinders them. Whoever they were that hindered these Christians, the apostle tells them, that by hearkening to them, they were kept from *obeying the truth*, and thereby in danger of losing the benefit of what they had done in religion. The gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had embraced and professed, he assures them was the truth; it was therein only that the true way of justification and salvation was fully discovered, and in order to their enjoying the advantage of it, it was necessary that they should obey it, that they should firmly adhere to it, and continue to govern their lives and hopes according to their directions of it. If therefore they should suffer themselves to be drawn away from it, they must needs be guilty of the greatest weakness and folly. Note, 1. That the truth is not only to be believed but to be obeyed, not only to be received in the light of it, but in the love and power of it. 2. That they do not rightly obey the truth, who do not steadfastly adhere to it. 3. That there is the same reason for our obeying the truth, which there was for our embracing it; and therefore they act very unreasonably, who when they have begun to run well in the Christian race, suffer themselves to be hindered, so as not to persevere in it.

5. He argues from their steadfastness in the faith and liberty of the gospel, from the ill rise of that persuasion, whereby they were drawn away from it, ver. 1. *This persuasion*, says he, *cometh not from him that calleth you*. The opinion or persuasion which the apostle here speaks of, was, no doubt, that of the necessity of their being circumcised and keeping the law of Moses, or of their mixing the works of the law with faith in Christ in the business of justification. This was what the judaizing teachers endeavoured to impose upon them, and what they had too easily fallen into. But to convince them of their folly herein, he tells them, that this persuasion did not come

of him that calleth them, i. e. either of God, by whose authority the gospel had been preached to them, and they had been called into the fellowship of it; or of the apostle himself, who had been employed as the instrument of calling them hereto. It could not come from God, for it was contrary to that way of justification and salvation which he had established, nor could they have received it from Paul himself; for whatever some might pretend, he had all along been an opposer and not a preacher of circumcision; and if in any instance he had submitted to it for the sake of peace, yet he had never pressed the use of it upon Christians, much less imposed it upon them as necessary to salvation. Since, then, this persuasion did not come of him that had called them, he leaves them to judge from whence it must arise, and sufficiently intimates that it could be owing to none but Satan and his instruments; who by this means were endeavouring to overthrow their faith, and obstruct the progress of the gospel, and therefore how much reason they had to reject it, and to continue steadfast in the truth which they had before embraced. Note, 1. That in order to our judging aright of different persuasions in religion there are among Christians, it concerns us to enquire, whether they come of him that calleth us, whether or no they are founded upon the authority of Christ and his apostles. 2. That if upon enquiry they appear to have no such foundation, how forward soever others may be to impose them upon us, we should by no means submit to them, but reject them.

6. The danger there was of the spreading of this infection, and the ill influence it might have upon others, is a further argument which the apostle urges against their complying with their false teachers, in what they would impose on them: it is impossible that to extenuate their fault they might be ready to say, that there were but few of those teachers among them who endeavoured to draw them into this persuasion and practice; or that they were only some lesser matters wherein they complied with them, that though they submitted to be circumcised, and to observe some few rites of the Jewish law, yet they had by no means renounced their Christianity, and gone over to Judaism: or suppose their complying thus far was so faulty as he would represent it, yet perhaps they might further say, there were but few among them that had done so, and therefore he need not be so much concerned about it. Now to obviate such pretences as these, and to convince them that there was more danger in it than they were aware of, he tells them, ver. 9. *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*; that the whole lump of Christianity may be tainted and corrupted by one such erroneous principle, or that the whole lump of the Christian society may be infected by one member of it; and therefore that they were greatly concerned not to yield in this single instance; or if they had done so, to endeavour by all proper methods to purge out the infection from among them. Note, That it is dangerous for Christian churches to encourage those among them who entertain, especially who set themselves to propagate, destructive errors. This was the case here: the doctrine which the false teachers were industrious to spread, and which some in these churches had been drawn into, was subversive of Christianity itself, as the apostle had before shewn; and therefore though the number either of the one or the other of these, might be but few, yet considering the fatal tendency of it, and the corruption of human nature, whereby others were too much disposed to be infected with it; he would not have them on that account to be easy and unconcerned; but remember that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. If these were indulged, the contagion might soon spread farther and wider; and if they suffered themselves to be imposed upon in this instance, it might soon issue in the utter ruin of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

7. That he might conciliate the greater regard to what he had said, he expresses the hopes he had concerning them, ver. 10. *I have confidence in you*, says he, *through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded*. Though he had many fears and doubts about them, which was the occasion of his using so much plainness and freedom with them, yet he hoped that through the blessing of God upon what he had written, they might be brought to be of the same mind with him, and to own and abide by that truth and liberty of the gospel, which he had preached to them, and was now endeavouring to confirm them in. Wherein he teaches us, that we ought to hope the best even of those concerning whom we have cause to fear the worst: And that they might be the less offended at the reproofs he had given them for their unsteadfastness in the faith, he lays the blame of it more upon others than upon themselves; for he adds, *But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever it be*. He was sensible that they were *some that troubled them and would pervert the gospel of Christ*, as, chap. i. 7. and possibly he may point to some one particular man, who was more busy and forward than others, and might be the chief instrument of the disorder that was among them, and to this he imputes their defection or inconstancy more than to any thing in themselves. Which may give us occasion to observe, that in reproofing sin and error, we should always distinguish between the leaders and the led: such as set themselves to draw others thereinto, and such as are drawn aside by them. Thus the apostle softens and alleviates the fault of these Christians, even while he is reproofing them, that he might the better persuade them to return to and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free: But as for him or them that troubleth them, whoever he or they were, he declares they *should bear their judgment*, he did not doubt but God would deal with them according to their deserts, and out of his just indignation against them as enemies of Christ and his church, he wishes that *they were even cut off*; not cut off from Christ and all hopes of salvation by him, but cut off by the censures of the church, which ought to witness against those teachers who thus corrupted the purity of the gospel. Note, That those, whether ministers or others, who set themselves to overthrow the faith of the gospel, and disturb the peace of Christians, do hereby forfeit the privileges of Christian communion, and deserve to be cut off from them.

8. To dissuade these Christians from hearkening to their judaizing teachers, and to recover them from the ill impressions they had made upon them, he represents them as men who had used very base and disingenuous methods to compass their designs, for they had misrepresented him, that they might the more easily gain their ends upon them: That which they were endeavouring was to bring them to submit to circumcision, and to mix Judaism with their Christianity; and the better to accomplish this design they had given out among them that Paul himself was a preacher. For when he says, ver. 11. *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision*, it plainly appears that they had reported him to have done so, and that they had made use of this as an argument to prevail with them to submit to it. It is likely they grounded this report upon his having circumcised Timothy, Acts xvi. 3. But though for good reasons he had yielded to circumcision in that instance, yet that he was a preacher of it, and especially in that sense wherein they imposed it, he utterly denies; and to prove the injustice of this charge upon him, he offers such arguments, as, if they would allow themselves to consider, could not fail to convince them of, viz. (1.) That if he would have preached circumcision, he might have avoided persecution: If I yet preach circumcision, says he, *Why do I yet suffer persecution?* It was evident, and they could not but be sensible of it, that he was hated and persecuted by the Jews; but what account could be given of this their behaviour towards him,

him, if he had so far symbolized with them as to preach up circumcision, and the observance of the law of Moses, as necessary to salvation? This was the great point they were contending for; and if he had fallen in with them herein, instead of being exposed to their rage, he might have been received into their favour. When therefore he was suffering persecution from them, this was a plain evidence he had not complied with them: Yea, that he was so far from preaching the doctrine he was charged with, that rather than do so, he was willing to expose himself to the greatest hazards. (2.) That if he had yielded to the Jews herein, *then would the offence of the cross have ceased*; they would not have took so much offence against the doctrine of Christianity, as they did, nor should he and others have been exposed to so much suffering on the account of it, as they were. He acquaints us, 1 Cor. i. 23. that the preaching of the cross of Christ (or the doctrine of justification and salvation only by faith in Christ crucified) *was to the Jews a stumbling block*. That which they were most offended at in Christianity, was, that thereby circumcision, and the whole frame of the legal administration, was set aside as no longer in force. This raised their greatest outcries against it, and stirred them up to oppose and persecute the professors of it. Now if Paul and others could have given into this opinion, that circumcision was still to be retained, and the observance of the law of Moses joined with faith in Christ as necessary to salvation, then their offence against it would have been in a great measure removed, and they might have avoided those sufferings they underwent for the sake of it. But though others, and particularly those who were so forward to asperse him as a preacher of this doctrine, could easily come into it, yet so could not he; he rather chose to hazard his ease and credit, yea, his very life itself, than thus to corrupt the truth, and give up the liberty of the gospel: And hence it was that the Jews continued to be so much offended against Christianity, and against him as the preacher of it. Thus the apostle clears himself from the unjust reproach which his enemies had cast upon him, and at the same time shews how little regard was due to those men who could treat him in such an injurious manner, and how much reason he had to wish that they were even cut off.

13. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. 17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26. Let us not be desirous of vain-glory provoking one another, envying one another.

In the latter part of this chapter the apostle comes to exhort these Christians to serious practical godliness, as the best antidote against the snares of the false teachers. Two things especially he presses upon them,

1. That they should not strive with one another, but love one another. He tells them, *ver. 13. that they had been called unto liberty*; and he would have them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but yet he would have them be very careful that they did not *use this liberty as an occasion to the flesh*, that they did not from thence take occasion to indulge themselves in any corrupt affections and practices, and particularly such as might create distance and disaffection, and be the ground of quarrels and contentions among them; But on the contrary, he would have them *by love to serve one another*, to maintain that mutual love and affection, which, notwithstanding any lesser differences there might be among them, would dispose them to all those offices of respect and kindness to each other, which the Christian religion obliged them to. Note, 1. That the liberty we enjoy as Christians, is not a *licentious* liberty; though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet he has not freed us from the obligation of it; the gospel is a *doctrine according to godliness*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin, that it lays us under the strongest obligations to avoid and subdue it. 2. That though we ought to stand fast in our *Christian liberty*, yet we should not insist upon it to the breach of *Christian charity*; we should not use it an occasion of strife and contention with our fellow Christians, who may be differently minded from us; but should always maintain such a temper towards each other as may dispose us by love to serve one another. This the apostle endeavours to persuade these Christians to, and there are two considerations which he set before them to this purpose: 1. *That all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, *ver. 14.* Love is the sum of the whole law; as love to God comprises the duties of the first table, so love to our neighbour those of the second. The apostle taketh notice of the latter here, because he was speaking of their behaviour towards one another; and when he makes use of this as an argument to persuade them to mutual love, he intimates both that this would be a good evidence of their sincerity in religion, and also the most likely means of rooting out those dissensions and divisions that were among them. It will appear that we are the disciples of Christ indeed, when we have love one to another, *John xiii. 35.* and where this temper is kept up, if it do not wholly extinguish those unhappy discords that are among Christians, yet at least would so far accommodate them, as that the fatal consequences of them might be prevented. 2. The sad and dangerous tendency of a contrary behaviour, *ver. 15.* But, says he, if instead of serving one another in

love, and therein fulfilling the law of God, *ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*. If instead of acting like men and Christians, they would behave themselves more like brute beasts in learning and rendering one another, they could expect nothing else as the consequence of it, but that they would be consumed one of another; and therefore they had the greatest reason not to indulge themselves in such quarrels and animosities. Note, That mutual strifes among brethren, if persisted in are like to prove a common ruin; they that devour one another, are in a fair way to be consumed one of another. Christian churches cannot be ruined but by their own hands; but if Christians, that should be helps to one another, and a joy one to another, be as brute beasts, biting and devouring each other, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace to them, and the Spirit of love should depart from them, and that the evil spirit that seeks the destruction of them all should prevail.

2. That they would all strive against sin; and happy would it be for the church, if Christians would let all their quarrels be swallowed up of this, even a quarrel against sin; if instead of biting and devouring one another on the account of their different opinions, they would all set themselves against sin in themselves and the places where they live. This is what we are chiefly concerned to fight against, and that which above every thing else we should make it our business to oppose and suppress. To excite Christians hereunto, and to assist them herein, the apostle shews,

(1.) That there is in every one a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. *ver. 17. The flesh*, i. e. the corrupt and carnal part of us, *lusteth*, i. e. strives and struggles with strength and vigour *against the Spirit*. It opposes all the motions of the Spirit, and resists every thing that is spiritual. On the other hand, *the Spirit*, i. e. the renewed part of us, *strives against the flesh* and opposes the will and desire of it; and from hence it comes to pass *that we cannot do the things that we would*; as the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil which our corrupt nature would prompt us to, so neither can we do all the good that we would, by reason of the oppositions we meet with from that corrupt and carnal principle: Even as in a natural man there is something of struggle, the convictions of his conscience, and the corruption of his own heart, strive with one another; his convictions would suppress his corruptions, and his corruptions silence his convictions; so in a renewed man, where there is something of a good principle, there is a struggle between the old nature, and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace; and this Christians must expect will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world.

(2.) That it is our duty and interest in this struggle to side with the better part, to side with our convictions against our corruptions, and with our graces against our lusts. Thus the apostle represents as our duty, and directs us to the most effectual means of success in it. If it should be asked, What course must we take that the better interest may get the better? He gives us this one general rule, which if duly observed, would be the most sovereign remedy against the prevalence of corruption, and that is to walk in the Spirit, *ver. 16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*. By the Spirit here may be meant either the Holy Spirit himself, who condescends to dwell in the hearts of those whom he has renewed and sanctified, to guide and assist them in the way of their duty; or that gracious principle which he implants in the souls of his people, and which lusts against the flesh, or that corrupt principle which still remains in them, as that does against it. Accordingly the duty here recommended to us is, that we set ourselves to act under the conduct and influence of the blessed Spirit, and agreeably to the motions and tendency of the new nature in us; and if this be our care in the ordinary course and tenor of our lives, we may depend upon it, that though we may not be freed from the stirrings and oppositions of our corrupt nature, yet we shall be kept from *fulfilling it in the lusts thereof*; so that though it remains in us, yet it shall not obtain a dominion over us. Note, That the best antidote against the poison of sin, is to walk in the Spirit; to be much in conversing with spiritual things, to mind the things of the soul, which is the spiritual part of a man, more than those of the body, which is the carnal part; to commit ourselves to the guidance of the word, wherein the Holy Spirit makes known the will of God concerning us, and in the way of our duty to act in a dependence on his aids and influences; and as this would be the best means of preserving them from fulfilling the lusts of flesh, so it would be a good evidence that they were Christians indeed; for, says the apostle, *ver. 18. If ye be led by the spirit ye are not under the law*, q. d. You must expect a struggle between flesh and Spirit as long as you are in the world; that the flesh shall be lusting against the Spirit, as well as the Spirit against the flesh; but if in the prevailing bent and tenor of your lives you are *led by the Spirit*; if you act under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit, and of that spiritual nature and disposition he has wrought in you; if you make the work of God your rule, and the grace of God your principle; it will from hence appear, that you are *not under the law*; not under the *condemning*, though you are still under the *commanding* power of it: for *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*; and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, *Rom. viii. 1—14.*

(3.) The apostle instanceth in the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and in the fruits of the Spirit, which must be cherished and brought forth, *ver. 19. &c.* and by instance in particular he further illustrates what he is here upon. He begins,

(1.) With the *works of the flesh*, which as they are many, so they are manifest: It is past dispute that the things he here speaks of are the works of the flesh, or the product of corrupt and depraved nature; most of them are condemned by the light of nature itself, and all of them by the light of scripture. The particulars he instanceth in are of various sorts; some are sins against the seventh commandment, such as *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*; by which are meant not only the gross acts of these sins, but all such thoughts, or words, or actions, as have a tendency towards the great transgression. Some are sins against the first and second commandments, as *idolatry and witchcraft*; others are sins against our neighbour, and contrary to the royal law of brotherly love, such as *hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife*, which too often occasion *seditions, heresies, envyings*, and sometimes break out into *murders*, not only of the names and reputation, but even of the very lives of our fellow creatures. Others are sins against themselves, such as *drunkenness and revellings*; and he concludes the catalogue with an *et cetera*, and gives fair warning to all to take care of them, as they hope to see the face of God with comfort. Of these, and such like, says he, *I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, how much soever they may flatter themselves with vain hopes, shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. These are sins which will undoubtedly shut men out of heaven. The world of spirits can never be comfortable to those that plunge themselves in the filth of the flesh; nor will the righteous and holy God ever admit such into his favour and presence, unless they are first *washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God*, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

(2.) He instanceth in the fruits of the Spirit, or the renewed nature; which as Christians we are concerned to bring forth, *ver. 22.* And here we may observe, that as sin is called the work of the flesh, because the flesh or corrupt

corrupt nature is the principle that moves and excites men to it: so grace is said to be the fruit of the Spirit, because it wholly proceeds from the Spirit, as the fruit does from the root: And whereas before the apostles had chiefly instanced in these works of the flesh, which were not only hurtful to men themselves, but tended to make them so to one another; so here he chiefly takes notice of those fruits of the Spirit, which had a tendency to make Christians agreeable one to another, as well as easy to themselves: and this was very suitable to the caution or exhortation he had before given, *ver. 13.* That they would *not use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh but by love serve one another*; particularly he recommends to us *love*, viz. to God especially, and to one another for his sake. *Joy*, by which may be understood cheerfulness in conversation with our friends, or rather a constant delight in God. *Peace*, viz. with God and conscience, or a peaceableness of temper and behaviour towards others, *Long suffering*, i. e. patience to defer anger, and a contentedness to bear injuries. *Gentleness*, i. e. such a sweetness of temper, and especially towards our inferiors, as disposes us to be affable and courteous, and easy to be intreated when any have wronged us. *Goodness*, i. e. kindness and beneficence, which shews itself in a readiness to do good to all as we have opportunity. *Faith*, i. e. fidelity, justice, and honesty, in what we profess and promise to others. *Meekness*, wherewith to govern our passions and resentments, so as not to be easily provoked, and when we are so, to be soon pacified: And *temperance*, viz. in meat and drink, and other enjoyments of life, so as not to be excessive and immoderate in the use of them. And concerning these things, or those in whom these fruits of the Spirit are found, the apostle says, *there is no law against them*, i. e. to condemn and punish them: Yea, from hence it appears, that they are not under the law, but under grace; for these fruits of the Spirit, in whomsoever they are found, do plainly shew, that such are *led by the Spirit*, and consequently that they are not under the law, as *ver. 13.*

And as by instancing in these works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, the apostle directs us both what we are to avoid and oppose, and what we are to cherish and cultivate: so, *ver. 24.* he acquaints us, and this is the sincere care and endeavour of all real Christians; *And they that are Christ's*, says he, i. e. they who are Christians indeed, not only in shew and profession, but in sincerity and truth, *have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*. As in their baptism they were obliged hereto, for being baptized into Christ, they were baptized into his death, *Rom. vi. 3.* so they are now sincerely employing themselves therein, and in conformity to their Lord and head, are endeavouring to die unto sin, as he had died for it. They have not yet obtained a complete victory over it, they have still flesh as well as Spirit in them, and that has its affections and lusts, which continue to give them no little disturbance; but as it does not now reign in their mortal bodies, so as that they obey it in the lusts thereof, *Rom. vi. 12.* so they are seeking the utter ruin and destruction of it, and to put it to the same shameful and ignominious though lingering death, which our Lord Jesus underwent for our sakes. Note, that if we would approve ourselves to be Christ's, such as are united to him, and interested in him, we must make it our constant care and business to crucify the flesh with its corrupt affections and lusts: Christ will never own those as his, who yield themselves the servants of sin. But though the apostle here only mentions crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts, as the care and character of real Christians, yet no doubt it is also implied, that on the other hand, we should shew forth those fruits of the Spirit which had just before been instancing in; this is no less our duty than that, nor is it less necessary to evidence our sincerity in religion: It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well: Our Christianity obliges us not only to die unto sin, but to live unto righteousness; not only to oppose the works of the flesh, but to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit too. If, therefore we would make it appear that we do indeed belong to Christ, this must be our sincere care and endeavour as well as the other: and that it was the design of the apostle to represent both the one and the other of these as our duty, and as necessary to support our character as Christians, may be gathered from what follows, *ver. 25.* where he adds, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*, i. e. if we profess to have received the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the Spirit of our minds, and indeed with a principle of spiritual life: let us make it appear by the proper fruits of the Spirit in our lives. He had before told us, that the Spirit of Christ is a privilege bestowed on all the children of God, *chap. iv. 6.* Now, says he, if we profess to be of this number, and as such to have obtained this privilege; let us shew it by a temper and behaviour agreeable hereunto; let us evidence our good principles by good practices. Our conversation will always be answerable to the principle which we are under the conduct and government of; as they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, so they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit, *Rom. viii. 5.* If therefore we would have it appear that we are Christ's, and that we are partakers of his Spirit, it must be our walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We must set ourselves in good earnest both to mortify the deeds of the body, and to walk in newness of life.

The apostle concludes this chapter with a caution against pride and envy, *ver. 26.* He had before been exhorting these Christians by love to serve one another, *ver. 13.* and had put them in mind of what would be the consequence, if instead of that they did bite and devour one another, *ver. 15.* Now as a means of engaging them to the one, and preserving them from the other of these, he here cautions them against being desirous of vain-glory, or giving way to an undue affection of the esteem and applause of men, because this, if it were indulged, would certainly lead them to provoke one another, and to envy one another. As far as this temper prevails among Christians, they will be ready to slight and despise those whom they look upon as inferior to them, and to be put out of humour if they are denied that respect which they think is their due from them; and they will also be apt to envy those by whom their reputation is in any danger of being lessened; and thus a foundation is laid for those quarrels and contentions, which as they are inconsistent with that love which Christians ought to maintain towards each other, so are greatly prejudicial to the honour and interest of religion itself. This therefore the apostle would have us by all means to watch against. Note, 1. That the glory which comes from men is vain-glory, which instead of being desirous of, we should be dead to. Note, 2. That an undue regard to the approbation and applause of men, is one great ground of the unhappy strifes and contentions that are among Christians.

C H A P. VI.

This chapter chiefly consists of two parts: In the former the apostle gives us several plain and practical directions, which more especially tend to instruct Christians in their duty to one another, and to promote the communion of saints in love, from *ver. 1. to ver. 10.* In the latter he revives the main design of the epistle, which was to fortify the Galatians against the arts of their judaizing teachers, and confirm them in the truth and liberty of the gospel: To which purpose he, 1. Gives them the

true character of these teachers, and shews them from what motives and with what views they acted, from *ver. 10. to ver. 14.* And, 2. On the other hand he acquaints them with his own temper and behaviour: from both which they might easily see how little reason they had to slight him, and to fall in with them. And then he concludes the epistle with a solemn benediction.

1. BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, by which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5. For every man shall bear his own burden. 6. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. 9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

The apostle having in the foregoing chapter exhorted Christians by love to serve one another, *ver. 13.* and also cautioned us, *ver. 26.* against a temper, which, if indulged, would hinder us from shewing that mutual love and serviceableness which he had recommended; in the beginning of this chapter he proceeds to give us some farther directions; which if duly observed, would both promote the one, and prevent the other of these, and render our behaviour both more agreeable to our Christian profession, and more useful and comfortable to one another; particularly,

1. We are here taught to deal tenderly with those that are overtaken in a fault, *ver. 1.* He puts a common case, *if a man be overtaken in a fault*, i. e. be brought to sin by the surprise of temptation. It is one thing to overtake a fault by contrivance and deliberation, and full resolution in sin; and another thing to be overtaken in a fault. The latter is the case here supposed, and herein the apostle shews that great tenderness should be used: They which are spiritual, by whom is meant, not only the ministers, as if none but they were to be called spiritual persons; but other Christians too, especially those of the higher form in Christianity; these must restore such a one with the spirit of meekness. Here observe, 1. The duty we are directed to which is to restore such; we should labour by faithful reproofs, and pertinent and seasonable counsels, to bring them to repentance: The original word *καταγγίζω* signifies to set in joint, as a dislocated bone is; accordingly we should endeavour to set them in joint again, to bring them to themselves by convincing them of their sin and error, persuading them to return to their duty, and comforting them in a sense of pardoning mercy thereupon; and having thus recovered them to confirm our love to them. 2. The manner wherein this is to be done, viz. with the spirit of meekness; not in wrath and passion, as those that triumph in a brother's fall, but with meekness, as those that rather mourn for them. Many needful reproofs lose their efficacy by being given in wrath: but when they are managed with calmness and tenderness, and appear to proceed from a sincere affection to them, and concern for their welfare, they are like to make a due impression. 3. A very good reason why this should be done with meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. We ought to deal very tenderly with those that are overtaken in sin, because we none of us know but it may some time or other be our own case. We also may be tempted, yea, and overcome by the temptation; and therefore if we rightly consider ourselves, this will dispose us to do by others as we desire to be done by in such a case.

2. We are here directed to bear one another's burdens, *ver. 2.* This may be considered either as referring to what goes before, and so may teach us to exercise forbearance and compassion towards one another, in the case of those weaknesses, and follies, and infirmities, which too often attend us; that though we should not wholly connive at them, yet we should not be severe against one another on the account of them; or as a more general precept, and so it directs us to sympathize with one another, under the various trials and troubles that we may meet with, and to be ready to afford each other that comfort and council, that help and assistance, which our circumstances may require. And to excite us hereunto, the apostle adds by way of motive, that so we shall fulfil the law of Christ. This is to act agreeably to the law of his precept, which is the law of love, and obliges us to a mutual forbearance and forgiveness, in sympathy with, and compassion towards each other; and it would also be agreeable to his pattern and example, which has the force of a law to us. He bears with us under our weaknesses and follies; he is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities; and therefore good reason we should maintain the same temper towards one another. Note, Though as Christians we are freed from the law of Moses, yet we are under the law of Christ; and therefore instead of laying unnecessary burdens upon others, as those that urged the observation of Moses's law did, it much more becomes us to fulfil the law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens.

The apostle being aware how great a hindrance pride would be to that mutual condescension and sympathy which he had been recommending, and that a conceit of ourselves would dispose us to censure and condemn, our brethren, instead of bearing with their infirmities, and endeavouring to restore them when overtaken with a fault, he therefore, *ver. 3.* takes care to caution us against this; he supposes it as a very possible thing (and it would be well if it were not too common) for a man to think himself to be something, to entertain a fond opinion of his own sufficiency, to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate and prescribe to them, when in truth he is nothing; has nothing of substance or solidity in him, or that can be a ground of that confidence and superiority which he assumes. And to dissuade us from giving way to this temper, he tells us, that such a one does but deceive himself, while he imposes upon others, by pretending to what he has not, he puts the greatest cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects of it. This will never gain him that esteem either with God or good men, which he is ready to expect; he is neither the freer from mistakes, nor will he be the more secure

against temptations, for the good opinion he has of his own sufficiency, but rather the more liable to fall into them and to be overcome by them; for he that thinks he stands, had need to take heed lest he fall. Instead therefore of indulging such a vain-glorious humour, which is both destructive of that love and kindness we owe to our fellow Christians, and also injurious to ourselves; it would much better become us to accept the apostle's exhortation, Phil. ii. 3. *to do nothing through strife or vain-glory: but that in lowliness of mind we should each esteem others better than ourselves.* Note, that self-conceit is but self-deceit; as it is inconsistent with that charity we owe to others. For charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. so it is a cheat upon ourselves, and there is not a more dangerous cheat in the world than self-deceit is. As a means of preventing this evil,

3. We are advised, *Every one to prove his own work*, ver. 4. By our own works is chiefly meant our own actions or behaviour. These the apostle directs us to prove, i. e. seriously and impartially to examine them by the rule of God's word, to see whether or no they are agreeable to it, and therefore such as God and conscience do approve of; and this he represents as the duty of every man; instead of being forward to judge and censure others, it would much more become us to search and try our own ways; our business lies more at home than abroad, with ourselves than with other men; for what have we to do to judge another man's servant? And from the connection of this exhortation with what goes before it, it appears, that if Christians did duly employ themselves in this work, they might easily discover those defects and failings in themselves, which would soon convince them how little reason they have either to be conceited of themselves, or severe in their censures of others. And so it gives us occasion to observe that the best way to keep us from being proud of ourselves, is to prove our own selves; the better we are acquainted with our own hearts and ways, the less liable shall we be to despise, and the more disposed to compassionate and help others under infirmities and afflictions.

And that we might be persuaded to this necessary and profitable duty of proving our own work, the apostle urges two considerations very proper for this purpose. (1.) That this is the way to have rejoicing in ourselves alone. If we set ourselves in good earnest to prove our own work, and upon the trial can approve ourselves to God, as to our sincerity and uprightness towards him, then may we expect to have comfort and peace in our own souls, having the testimony of our own consciences for us, as 2 Cor. i. 12. And this he intimates would be a much better ground of joy and satisfaction than to be able to rejoice in another, either in the good opinion which others may have of us, or in having gained over others to our opinion, which the false teachers were wont to glory in, as we see, ver. 13. or by comparing ourselves with others, as it should seem some did, who were ready to think well of themselves, because they were not so bad as some others. Too many are apt to value themselves upon such accounts as these; but the joy that results from thence is nothing to that which arises from an impartial trial of ourselves by the rule of God's word, and our being able thereupon to approve ourselves to him. Note, 1. That though we have nothing in ourselves to boast of, yet we may have matter of rejoicing in ourselves: Our works can merit nothing at the hand of God, but if our consciences can witness for us, that they are such as he for Christ's sake approves and accepts, we may upon good ground rejoice therein. 2. That the true way to have rejoicing in ourselves, is to be much in proving our own works; in examining ourselves by the unerring rule of God's word, and not by the false measure of what others are, or may think of us. 4. That it is much more desirable to have matter of glorying in ourselves than in another. If we have the testimony of our consciences that we are accepted of God, we need not much concern ourselves about what others think or say of us; and without this the good opinion of others will stand us in little stead. (2.) The other argument which the apostle uses to press upon us this duty of proving our own work is, *That every man shall bear his own burden*, ver. 5. the meaning of which is, that at the great day every one shall be reckoned with according as his behaviour here has been. He supposes that there is a day coming when we must all give an account of ourselves to God; and he declares, that then the judgment will proceed, and the sentence pass, not according to the sentiments of the world concerning us, or any ungrounded opinion we may have had of ourselves; or upon our having been better or worse than others; but according as our state and behaviour has really been in the sight of God. And if there be such an awful time to be expected, when he will render to every one according to his works, sure there is the greatest reason why we should prove our own works now; if we must certainly be called to an account hereafter, sure we ought to be often calling ourselves to an account here, to see whether or no we are such as God will own and approve then; and as this is our duty, so if it were more our practice, we should entertain more becoming thoughts both of ourselves and our fellow Christians, and instead of bearing hard upon one another, on the account of any mistakes or failings we may be guilty of, we should be more ready to fulfil that law of Christ, by which we must be judged in bearing one another's burden.

4. Christians are here exhorted to be free and liberal in maintaining their ministers, ver. 5. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* Where we may observe, (1.) That the apostle speaks of it as a thing known and acknowledged, that as there are some to be taught, so there are others who are appointed to teach them. The office of the ministry is a divine institution, which does not lie open in common to all, but is confined to those only whom God has qualified for it and called to it; even reason itself directs us to put a difference between the teachers and the taught; for if all were teachers there would be none to be taught, and the scriptures sufficiently declare, that it is the will of God we should do so. (2.) That it is the word of God wherein ministers are to teach and instruct others; that which they are to preach is the word, 2 Tim. iv. 2. That which they are to declare is the council of God, Acts xx. 27. They are not lords of our faith, but helpers of our joy, 2 Cor. i. 24. It is the word of God which is the only rule of faith and life; this they are concerned to study, and to open, and improve for the edification of others, but are no further to be regarded than as they speak according to this rule. (3.) That it is the duty of those who are taught in the word, to support those who are appointed to teach them: for they are to communicate to them in all good things, i. e. freely and cheerfully to contribute of the good things which God has blessed them with, that is needful for their comfortable subsistence. Ministers are to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 13. they are not to entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4. And therefore it is but fit and equitable, that while they are sowing to others spiritual things, they should reap their carnal things. And this the appointment of God himself: for as under the law, they who ministered about holy things lived of the things of the temple: so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 11—13, 14.

5. Here is a caution to take heed of mocking God, or of deceiving ourselves, by imagining that he can be imposed upon by mere pretensions or professions, ver. 7. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* This may be considered as referring to the foregoing exhortation, and so the design of it is to convince those of their sin and folly, who endeavoured by any plausible pretences, to excuse themselves from doing their duty in supporting their mi-

nisters: or it may be taken in a more general view, as respecting the whole business of religion, and so as designed to take men off from entertaining any vain hopes of enjoying the rewards of it, while they live in the neglect of the duties of it. The apostle here supposes that many are apt to excuse themselves from the work of religion, and especially the more self-denying and chargeable parts of it, though at the same time they may make a shew and profession of it; but he assures them that *this their way is their folly*, for though hereby they may possibly impose upon others, yet they do but deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who is perfectly acquainted with their hearts as well as actions, and as he cannot be deceived, so will not be mocked; and therefore to prevent this, he directs us to lay it down as a rule to ourselves, *That whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*; or that according as we behave ourselves now, so will our account be in the great day: Our present time is seed-time, in the other world there will be a great harvest; and as the husbandman reaps in the harvest according as he sows in the seedness, so we shall reap then as we sow now. And he further acquaints us, ver. 8. that as there are two sorts of seedness, viz. sowing to the flesh, and sowing to the spirit; so accordingly will the reckoning be hereafter, *If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption: If we sow to the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind.* They that live a carnal sensual life, who instead of employing themselves to the honour of God, and the good of others, spend all their thoughts, and care, and time, about the flesh, must expect no other fruit of such a course but corruption: a mean and short-lived satisfaction at present, and ruin and misery at the end of it. But on the other hand, they that sow to the Spirit, who, under life of devotedness to God, and of usefulness and serviceableness to others, may depend upon it, *that of the Spirit they shall reap life everlasting*; they shall have the truest comfort in their present course, and an eternal life and happiness at the end of it. Note, that they who go about to mock God, do but deceive themselves: hypocrisy in religion is the greatest folly as well as wickedness, since the God we have to do with can easily see through all our disguises, and will certainly deal with us hereafter, not according to our professions but our practices.

6. Here is a further caution given us, *not to be weary in well-doing*, ver.

9. As we should not excuse ourselves from any part of our duty, so neither should we grow weary in it. There is in all of us too great a proneness hereunto; we are very apt to flag and tire in duty; yea to fall off from it, particularly that part of it, which the apostle here has a special regard to, viz. that of doing good to others. This therefore he would have us carefully to watch and guard against; and he gives this very good reason for it, because *in due season we shall reap if we faint not*: where he assures us, that there is a recompence of reward in reserve for all that sincerely employ themselves in well-doing; that this reward will certainly be bestowed on us in the proper season, if not in this world, yet to be sure in the next; but then that it is upon supposition that we faint not in the way of our duty. If we grow weary of it and withdraw from it, we shall not only miss of this reward, but lose the comfort and advantage of what we have already done; but if we hold on and hold out in well-doing, though our reward may be delayed, yet it will surely come, and will be so great as to make us an abundant recompence for all our pains and constancy. Note, That perseverance in well-doing is our wisdom and interest as well as duty, for to this only is the reward promised.

7. Here is an exhortation to all Christians to do good in their places, ver. 10. *As we have therefore opportunity, &c.* It is not enough that we be good ourselves, but we must do good to other, if we would approve ourselves to be Christians indeed. The duty here recommended to us, is the same that is spoken of in the foregoing verses; and as there the apostle exhorts us to sincerity and perseverance in it, so he here directs us both as to the objects and the rule of it. (1.) The objects of this duty are more generally all men; we are not to confine our charity and beneficence within too narrow bounds, as the Jews and judaizing Christians were apt to do; but should be ready to extend it to all that partake of the same common nature with us, as far as we are capable, and they stand in need of us. But yet in the exercise of it, we are to have a special regard to the household of faith, or to those who profess the same common faith, and are members of the same body of Christ with us; though others are not to be excluded, yet these are to be preferred. The charity of Christians should be extensive charity; but yet therein a particular respect is to be had to good people. God doth good to all, but in an especial manner he is good to his own servants; and we must in doing good be followers of God as dear children. (2.) The rule which we are to observe in doing good to others is, *as we have opportunity*: which implies, 1. That we should be sure to do it while we have opportunity, or while our life lasts, which is the only season wherein we are capable of doing good to them. If therefore we would behave ourselves aright in this matter, we must not, as too many do, neglect it in our life time, and defer it till we come to die, under a pretence of doing something of this nature then: for as we cannot be sure that we shall then have an opportunity for it; so neither if we should, have we any ground to expect that what we do will be so acceptable to God, much less that we can atone for our past neglects by leaving something behind us for the good of others, when we could no longer keep it ourselves. But we should take care to do good in our life time, yea, to make this the business of our lives. And, 2. That we be ready to improve every opportunity for it; we should not content ourselves in having done some good already: but whenever fresh occasions offer themselves, as far as our capacity reaches, we should be ready to embrace them too, for we are directed to give a portion to seven, and also to eight, Eccles. xi. 2. Note, 1. That as God has made it our duty to do good to others, so he takes care in his providence to furnish us with opportunities for it: the poor we have always with us, Matth. xxvi. 11. 2. That whenever God gives us an opportunity of being useful to others, he expects we should improve it, according to our capacity and ability. 3. That we have need of godly wisdom and discretion to direct us in the exercise of our charity and beneficence, and particularly in the choice of the proper objects of it; for though none who stand in need of us are to be wholly overlooked, yet there is a difference to be made between some and others.

11. Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. 12. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16. And as many

many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. 17. From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. 18. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

The apostle having at large established the doctrine of the gospel, and endeavoured to persuade these Christians to a behaviour agreeable to it, seems as if he intended here to have put an end to the epistle, especially when he had acquainted them, that as a particular mark of his respect to them, he had written this large letter *with his own hand*, and had not made use of another as an amanuensis; and only subscribed his name to it, as he was wont to do in his other epistles: but such was his affection to them, and concern to recover them from the ill impressions made upon them by their false teachers, that he cannot break off till he has once again given them the true character of those teachers, and an account of his own contrary temper and behaviour; that by comparing these together, they might the more easily see how little reason they had to depart from the doctrine he had taught them, and to comply with theirs.

1. He gives them the true character of those teachers that were industrious to seduce them, in several particulars. As, (1.) That they were men who *desired to make a fair shew in the flesh*, ver. 12. They were very zealous for the externals of religion, forward to observe, and to oblige others to observe the rites of the ceremonial law; though at the same time they had little or no regard to real piety: for as the apostle says of them in the following verse, *neither did they themselves keep the law*. Proud, and vain, and carnal hearts, desire nothing more than to make a fair shew in the flesh; and they can easily be content with so much religion as will help them to keep up such a fair shew; but many times those have least of the substance of religion who are most solicitous to make a shew of it. (2.) They were men that were afraid of suffering, for they *constrained the Gentile Christians to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*. It was not so much out of regard to the law, as to themselves; they were willing to sleep in a whole skin, and, to save their worldly cargo, cared not though they made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience: That which they chiefly aimed at, was to please the Jews, and so keep up their reputation among them, and so to prevent the trouble that Paul, and other faithful professors of the doctrine of Christ, lay open to. And, (3.) Another part of their character was, that they were men of a *party spirit*, and who had no further zeal for the law, than as it subverted their carnal and selfish designs; for they *desired to have these Christians circumcised that they might glory in their flesh*, ver. 13. that they might say, they had gained them over to their side, and made profelytes of them, of which they carried the mark in their flesh. And thus while they pretended to promote religion, they were the greatest enemies of it, for nothing has been more destructive to the interest of religion than men's sliding and party making.

2. He acquaints us, on the other hand, with his own temper and behaviour, or makes profession of his own faith and hope, and joy; particularly,

(1.) That his principal glory was in the cross of Christ; *God forbid*, says he, *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 14. By the cross of Christ is here meant, his sufferings and death on the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. This was what the Jews stumbled at, and the Greeks accounted foolishness; and the judaizing teachers themselves, though they had embraced Christianity, yet were so far ashamed of it, that, in compliance with the Jews, and to avoid persecution from them, they were for mixing the observation of the law of Moses with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation: but Paul had a very different opinion of it; he was so far from being offended at the cross of Christ, or ashamed of it, or afraid to own it, that he *glories in it*; yea, he desires to glory in nothing else, but rejects the thought of setting up any thing in competition with it as the object of his esteem, with the utmost abhorrence. *God forbid*, &c. This was the ground of all his hope as a Christian: this was the doctrine, which, as an apostle, he was resolved to preach: and whatever trials his firm adherence to it might bring upon him, he was ready, for his sake, not only to submit to them, but to rejoice in them. Note, That the cross of Christ is a good Christian's chiefest glory, and there is the greatest reason why we should glory in it, for to it we owe all our joys and hopes.

(2.) That he was dead to the world. By Christ, or by the cross of Christ, *the world was crucified to him, and he to the world*; he had experienced the power and virtue of it in winning him from the world, and this was one great reason of his glorifying in it. The false teachers were men of a worldly temper, their chief concern was about their secular interests, and therefore they accommodated their religion thereunto. But Paul was a man of another spirit; as the world had no kindness for him, so neither had he any great regard to it; he was got above both the smiles and the frowns of it; and was become as indifferent to it as one that is a dying out of it. This is a temper of mind that all Christians should be labouring after; and the best way to attain it, is to converse much with the cross of Christ; the highest esteem we have of him, the meaner opinion shall we have of the world; and the more we contemplate the sufferings our dear Redeemer met with from the world, the less likely shall we be to be in love with it.

(3.) That he did not lay the stress of his religion on one side or other of the contesting interests, but on sound Christianity, ver. 15. There was at that time an unhappy division among Christians, and circumcision and uncircumcision were both names by which they were distinguished from each other; for, chap. ii. 9—12. the Jewish Christians are called *the circumcision*, and *they of the circumcision*. The false teachers were very zealous for circumcision: yea to that degree as to represent it as necessary to salvation, and therefore they did all they could to constrain the Gentile Christians to submit to it: wherein they had carried the matter much farther than others did; for though the apostles concurred at the use of it among the Jewish converts, yet they were by no means for imposing it upon the Gentiles: But what *they* laid so great a stress upon, Paul made very little account of. It was indeed of great importance to the interests of Christianity, that circumcision should not be imposed on the Gentile converts, and therefore *he* had set himself with the utmost vigour to oppose; but as for mere circumcision or uncircumcision, whether those who had embraced the Christian religion had been Jews or Gentiles; and whether they were for or against continuing the use of circumcision, so that they did not place their religion in it: this was comparatively a matter of little moment with him; for he very well knew, that *in Jesus Christ*, i. e. in his account, or under the Christian dispensation, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*, viz. as to man's acceptance with God: but *a new creature*. Where he acquaints us, both wherein religion does not, and wherein it doth consist; it does not consist in *circumcision or uncircumcision*, in our being in this or the other denomination of Christians; but it consists in our being *new creatures*; not in having a new name, or putting on a new face, but in

our being renewed in the spirit of our minds; and having Christ formed in us; this is of the greatest account with God; and so it was with the apostle. If we compare this text with some others we may more fully see what it is that renders us most acceptable to God, and what therefore we should be chiefly concerned about; Here we are told, that it is *a new creature*; and, chap. v. 6. that it is *faith which worketh by love*, and 1. Cor. vii. 19. that it is *the keeping the commandments of God*: from all which it appears, that it is such a change of mind and heart, whereby we are disposed and enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to live a life of devotedness to God; and there where this inward vital practical religion is wanting, no outward professions, or particular names, will ever stand us in any stead, or be sufficient to recommend us to him. And were Christians duly concerned to experience this in themselves, and to promote it in others; if it did not make them lay aside their distinguishing names, yet it would at least take them off from laying so great a stress upon them, as they too often do. Note, That Christians should take care to lay the stress of their religion where God has laid it, viz. on those things which are available to our acceptance with him; so we see the apostle did, and it is our wisdom and interest herein to follow his example.

The apostle having shewn what was of chief consideration in religion, and what he laid the greatest stress upon, viz. not a mere empty name of profession, but a sound and saving change; in ver. 16, he pronounces a blessing upon all those that walk according to this rule: *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God*. The rule which he here speaks of, may be considered as signifying either more generally the whole word of God, which is the complete and perfect rule of faith and life; or that doctrine of the gospel, or way of justification and salvation which he had laid down in this epistle, viz. by faith in Christ without the works of the law; or as more immediately referring to the new creature, which he had just before been speaking of: The blessings which he desires for those that walk according to this rule, or which he gives them the hope and prospect of, (for the words may be taken either as a prayer or a promise) are *peace and mercy*. Peace, i. e. with God and conscience, and all the comforts of this life, as far as they are needful for them: And mercy, viz. an interest in the free love and favour of God in Christ, which is the spring and fountain of all other blessings. A foundation is laid for these in that gracious change which is wrought in them; and while they behave themselves as new creatures, and govern their lives and hopes by the rule of the gospel, they may most assuredly depend upon them; And these he declares shall be the portion of *all the Israel of God*, by whom he means all sincere Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles; all that are Israelites indeed, who though they may not be the natural, yet are become the spiritual seed of Abraham; these being heirs of his faith, are also heirs together with him of the same promise, and consequently entitled to the peace and mercy here spoken of. The Jews and judaizing teachers were for confining these blessings only to such as were circumcised and kept the law of Moses; but on the contrary the apostle declares that they belong to all who walk according to the rule of the gospel, or of the new creature, even to all the Israel of God; intimating, that these only are the true Israel of God, who walk according to this rule, and not that of circumcision, which they insisted so much upon; and therefore that this was the true way to obtain peace and mercy. Note, 1. That real Christians are such as walk by rule, not a rule of their own devising, but that which God himself has prescribed to them. 2. That even those who walk according to this rule, do yet stand in need of the mercy of God. But, 3. That all who sincerely endeavour to walk according to this rule, may be assured that peace and mercy shall be upon them: this is the best way to have peace with God, ourselves, and others; and hereupon, as we may be sure of the favour of God now, so that we shall find mercy with himself hereafter.

(4.) That he had chiefly suffered persecution for the sake of Christ and Christianity, ver. 17. As the cross of Christ, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, was what he chiefly gloried in; so he had been willing to run all hazards rather than he would betray his truth, or suffer it to be corrupted. The false teachers were afraid of persecution, and this was the great reason why they were so zealous for circumcision, as we see, ver. 12. But this was the least of Paul's concern; he was not moved at any of the afflictions he met with, nor did he count his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, Acts xx. 24. He had already suffered much in the cause of Christ, for he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus; the scars of those wounds which he sustained from persecuting enemies, for his steady adherence to him, and that doctrine of the gospel which he had received from him. And as from hence it appeared that he was firmly persuaded of the truth and importance of it, and that he was far from being a favourer of circumcision, as they had falsely reported him to be; so hereupon with a becoming warmth and vehemence, suitable to his authority as an apostle, and to the deep concern of mind he was under, he insists upon it, that *no man should henceforth trouble him*, viz. by opposing his doctrine and authority, or by any such calumnies and reproaches as he had had cast upon him; for as both from what he had said and what he had suffered, they appeared to be highly unjust and injurious: so also that they were very unreasonable who either raised or received them. Note, 1. That it may justly be presumed men are fully persuaded of those truths, which they are willing to suffer in the defence of. And, 2. That it is very unjust to charge those things upon others, which are contrary not only to their profession, but their sufferings too.

The apostle having now finished what he intended to write for the conviction and recovery of the churches of Galatia, concludes the epistle with his apostolical benediction, ver. 18. he calls them his *brethren*, wherein he shews his great humility, and the tender affection he had for them notwithstanding the ill treatment he had met with from them: he takes his leave of them with this very serious and affectionate prayer, that *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirits*. This was a usual farewell wish of the apostles, as we see, Rom. xvi. 19, 20. and 1 Cor. xvi. 23. And herein he prays, that they might enjoy the favour of Christ, both in the special effects and the sensible evidences of it, that they might receive from him all that grace which was needful to guide them in their way, to strengthen them in their work, to establish them in their Christian course, and to encourage and comfort them under all the trials of life, and the prospect of death itself. This is fitly called *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is both the sole purchaser and the appointed dispenser of it: And though these churches had done enough to forfeit it, by suffering themselves to be drawn into an opinion and practice which was highly dishonourable to Christ, as well as dangerous to them: yet out of his great concern for them, and knowing of what importance it was to them, he earnestly desires it on their behalf; yea, that it might be *with their spirit*, that they might continually experience the influences of it upon their souls, disposing and enabling to act with sincerity and uprightness in religion. We need desire no more to make us happy than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: This the apostle begs for these Christians, and therein shews us what we are chiefly concerned to obtain; and both for their and our encouragement to hope for it, he adds his *amen*.

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE EPISTLE OF

St. Paul to the Ephesians.

Completed by Mr. Roswell

Some think that this epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter sent to several churches: and that the copy directed to the Ephesians happened to be taken into the canon, and so it came to bear that particular inscription. And they have been induced the rather to think this, because it is the only one of all St. Paul's epistles, that has nothing in it particularly adapted to the state or case of that particular church; but has much of common concernment to all Christians: and especially of all those who, having been Gentiles in times past were converted to Christianity. But then it may be observed, on the other hand, that the epistle is expressly inscribed [*chap. i. ver. 1.*] *to the saints which are at Ephesus*: And in the close of it he tells them that he had sent Tychius unto them, whom in *2 Tim. iv. 12.* he says, he had sent to Ephesus.

It is an epistle that bears date out of a prison: And some have observed that what this apostle wrote when he was a prisoner, had the greatest relief and savour in it of the things of GOD. When his tribulations did abound, his consolations and experiences did much more abound. From whence we may observe, that *afflictive exercises of GOD's people and particularly of his ministers, do oftentimes tend to the advantage of others as well as to their own.*

The apostle's design is to settle and establish the Ephesians in the truth: and further to acquaint them with the mystery of the gospel in order to it. In the former part he represents the great privilege of the Ephesians, who being in times past idolatrous heathens, were now converted to Christianity and received into covenant with God, which he illustrates from a view of their deplorable state before their conversion, *chap. 1, 2, 3.* In the latter part, (which we have in the 4th, 5th, and 6th, chapters) he instructs them in the principal duties of religion, both personal and relative; and exhorts and quickens them to the faithful discharges of them. Zancy observes, that we have here an epitome of the whole Christian doctrine, and of almost all the chief heads of divinity.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The introduction to the whole epistle, which is much the same as in others, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The apostle's thanksgivings and praises to God for his inestimable blessings bestowed on the believing Ephesians, ver. 3—14. (3.) His earnest prayers to God in their behalf, ver. 15—23. This great apostle was wont to abound in prayers and in thanksgivings to almighty God: which he generally so disposes and orders, as at the same time they carry with them, and convey the great and important doctrines of the Christian religion and the most weighty instructions to all those who seriously pursue them.

1. PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is, 1. The title St. Paul takes to himself, as belonged to him: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, &c.* He reckoned it a great honour to be employed by Christ, as one of the messengers to the sons of men. The apostles were prime officers in the Christian church, being extraordinary ministers appointed for a time only. They were furnished by their great Lord with extraordinary gifts, and the immediate assistance of the Spirit that they might be fitted for publishing and spreading the gospel, and for the governing of the church in its infant-state. Such an one St. Paul was, and that not by the will of man conferring that office upon him, nor by his own intrusion into it; but by the will of God, very expressly and plainly signified to him; he being immediately called (as the other apostles were) by Christ himself to the work; and every faithful minister of Christ (though his call and office are not of so extraordinary a nature, yet) may, with our apostle, reflect on it as an honour and comfort to himself, that he is what he is by the will of God. 2. The persons to whom this epistle is sent: *To the saints who are at Ephesus, i. e. to the Christians who were members of the church at Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia.* He calls them *saints*, for so they were in profession, and such they were bound to do in truth and reality: and many of them were so. All Christians must be saints; and if they come not under that character on earth, they will never be saints in glory. He calls them *the faithful in Christ Jesus, i. e. believers in him, and firm and constant in their adherence to him, and to his truths and ways.* They are not *saints* who are not *faithful*, believing in Christ, firmly adhering to him, and true to the profession they make of relation to their Lord. Note, *It is not only the honour of ministers, but of private Christians too, to have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.—In Christ Jesus, from whom they derive all their grace and spiritual strength; and in whom their persons and all that they perform are made accepted.* 3. The apostolical benediction: *Grace be to you, &c.* This is the token in every epistle; and it speaks the apostle's good will to his friends, and a real desire of their welfare. By grace we are to understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which proceed from it: by peace all other blessings, spiritual and temporal, the fruits and products of the former. No peace without grace. No peace, nor grace, but from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. These peculiar blessings proceed from God not as a Creator, but as a Father by special relation. And they come from our Lord Jesus Christ, who having purchased them for his people, has a right to bestow them upon them. Indeed the saints, and the faithful in Christ Jesus, had already received grace and peace; but the increase of these is very desirable, and, the best saints stand in need of fresh supplies of the graces of the Spirit, and cannot but desire to improve and grow; and therefore they should pray, each one for himself, and for one another, that such blessings may fall abundantly upon them.

After this short introduction, he comes to the matter and body of the epistle; and though it may seem somewhat peculiar in a letter, yet the Spirit of God saw fit that this his discourse of divine things in this chapter should be cast into prayers and praises: which as they are solemn addresses to God, so they convey weighty instructions to others. Prayer may preach; and praise may do so too.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace; 8. Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence: 9. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to the good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: even in him: 11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purposes of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will: 12. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13. In whom he also trusted, after that he heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise; 14. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

He begins with thanksgivings and praise, and enlarges with a great deal of fluency and copiousness of affection upon the exceeding great and precious benefits which we enjoy by Jesus Christ. For the great privileges of our religion are very aptly recounted and enlarged upon in our praises to God.

In general, ver. 3. He blesses God for spiritual blessings; where he styles him the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: for as mediator, the Father was his God; as God, and the second person in the blessed Trinity, God was his Father. And it speaks the mystical union betwixt Christ and believers, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their God and Father; and that in and through him. All blessings come from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. No good can be expected from a righteous and holy God to sinful creatures, but by his mediation. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings. Note, *Spiritual blessings are the best blessings with which God blesseth us, and for which we are to bless him.* HE blesseth US by bestowing such things upon us as make us really blessed. WE cannot thus bless God again: but must do it by praising and magnifying, and speaking well of him on the account: and whom God blesses with some, he blesses with all spiritual blessings. To whom he gives Christ, he freely gives all these things. It is not so with temporal blessings; some are favoured

favoured with health and not with riches; some with riches, and not with health, &c. But where God blesses with spiritual blessings, he blesses with all. They are *spiritual blessings in heavenly places*, i. e. say some, in the church distinguished from the world, and called out of it. Or, it may be read in *heavenly things*, such as come from heaven, and are designed to prepare men for it, and to secure their reception into it. We should hence learn to mind spiritual and heavenly things as the principal things, spiritual and heavenly blessings as the best blessings, with which we cannot be miserable, and without which we cannot but be so. *Set not your affections on things on the earth, but on those things which are above.* These we are blessed with in *Christ*: for as all our services ascend to God through Christ, so all our blessings are conveyed to us the same way: he being the Mediator betwixt God and us.

The particular spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in *Christ*, and for which we ought to bless God, are [many of them] here enumerated and enlarged upon.

1. Election and predestination, which are the secret things from whence the others flow, ver. 4, 5, and 21. Election, or choice, respects that lump or mass of mankind out of which some are chosen, from which they are separated and distinguished. Predestination hath respect to the blessings they are designed for; particularly the adoption of children: it being the purpose of God, that in due time we should become his adopted children, and so have a right to all the privileges, and to the inheritance, of children. We have here the date of this act of love: it was before the foundation of the world: not only before God's people had being, but before the world had a beginning: for they are chosen in the counsel of God from all eternity. And it magnifies these blessings to a high degree, that they are the products of eternal counsel. The aims which you give to beggars at your doors, proceed from a sudden resolve: but the provision which a parent makes for his children is the result of many thoughts, and is put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity. And as this magnifies divine love, so it secures the blessings to God's elect; for the purpose of God according to election shall stand. He acts in pursuance of his eternal purpose in bestowing spiritual blessings upon his people. *He hath blessed us according as he hath chosen us in him*, i. e. in Christ the great head of the election, who is emphatically called God's elect, his chosen; and in the chosen Redeemer an eye of favour was cast upon them. Observe here one great end and design of this choice: chosen—that we should be holy, not because he foresaw they would be holy, but because he determined to make them so. All who are chosen to happiness at the end, are chosen to holiness as the means. Their sanctification, as well as their salvation, is the result of the counsels of divine love. And without blame before him; i. e. that their holiness might not be only external and in outward appearance, so as to prevent blame from men: but internal and real, and what God himself will account such, who looketh at the heart: such holiness proceedeth from love, i. e. to God and to our fellow-creatures; the charity being the principle of all true holiness. The original word signifies such as no man can carp at; and therefore some understand it of that perfect holiness that the saints shall attain to in the life to come, which will be eminently before God; they being in his immediate presence for ever.

Here is also the rule, and the final cause of God's election; it is according to the good pleasure of his will, ver. 5. not for the sake of any thing in them foreseen, but because it was his sovereign will, and a thing highly pleasing to him. It is, according to the purpose, i. e. the fixed and unalterable will of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, ver. 11. who powerfully accomplishes whatever concerns his elect, as he has wisely and freely fore-ordained and decreed: the last and great end and design of all which is his own glory. To the praise of the glory of his grace, ver. 6. That we should be to the praise of his glory, ver. 12. i. e. that we should live and behave ourselves in such a manner that his rich grace might be magnified, and appear glorious and worthy of the highest praise. All is of God, and from him and through him, and therefore all must be to him, and center in his praise. Note, The glory of God is his own end, and it should be ours in all that we do. The next spiritual blessing the apostle takes notice of is,

2. Acceptance with God through Jesus Christ. Wherein, or by which grace, he hath made us accepted in the beloved, ver. 6. Jesus Christ is the beloved of his Father, (Matt. iii. 17.) as well as of angels and saints. It is our great privilege to be accepted of God, which implies his love to us, and his taking us under his care and into his family. We cannot be thus accepted of God, but in and through Jesus Christ. He loves his people for the sake of the beloved.

3. Remission of sins and redemption through the blood of Jesus, ver. 7. No remission without redemption. It was by reason of sin that we were captivated, and we cannot be released from our captivity, but by the remission of our sins. This redemption we have in Christ, and this remission through his blood. The guilt and the stain of sin could be no otherwise removed than by the blood of Jesus. All our spiritual blessings flow down to us in that stream. This great benefit which comes freely to us, was dearly bought and paid for by our blessed Lord: and yet it is according to the riches of God's grace. Christ's satisfaction and God's rich grace are very consistent in the great affair of man's redemption. God was satisfied by Christ as our substitute and surety; but it was rich grace that would accept of a surety, when he might have executed the severity of the law upon the transgressor: and it was rich grace to provide such a surety as his own Son, and freely to deliver him up, when nothing of that nature could have entered into our thoughts, or have been any otherwise found out for us. In which instance he has not only manifested riches of grace but hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, ver. 8. Wisdom, in contriving the dispensation, and prudence in exceeding the counsel of his will, as he has done. How illustrious have the divine wisdom and prudence rendered themselves in so happily adjusting the matter between justice and mercy in this grand affair; in securing the honour of God and his law, at the same time that the recovery of sinners and their salvation are ascertained and made sure?

4. Another privilege which the apostle here bleisseth God for, is divine revelation, that God hath made known to us the mystery of his will, ver. 9. i. e. so much of his good will to men, which had been concealed for a long time, and is still concealed from so great a part of the world: this we owe to Christ, who having laid in the bosom of the Father from eternity, came to declare his will to the children of men. According to his good pleasure, i. e. his secret counsels concerning man's redemption, which he had purposed, or resolved upon, merely in and from himself, and not for any thing in them. In this revelation, and in his making known unto us the mystery of his will, the wisdom and the prudence of God do abundantly shine forth. It is described at ver. 13. as the word of truth and the gospel of our salvation. Every word of it is true; it contains and instructs us in the most weighty and important truths, and it is confirmed and sealed by the very oath of God: From whence we should learn to betake ourselves to it in all our searches after divine truth. It is the gospel of our salvation. It publishes the glad tidings of salvation, and contains the offer of it. It points out the way that leads to it; and the blessed Spirit renders the reading and the ministration of it effectual to the salvation of souls. O, how ought we prize this glorious

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gospel, and to bless God for it! This is the light shining in a dark place, for which we have reason to be thankful, and to which we should take heed.

5. Union in and with Christ, is a great privilege, a spiritual blessing, and the foundation of many others. He does gather together in all things in Christ, ver. 10. All the lines of divine revelation meet in Christ; all religion centers in him. Jews and Gentiles were united to each other by being both united to Christ. Things in heaven and things in earth, are gathered together in him. Peace made, correspondence settled betwixt heaven and earth through him. The innumerable company of angels become one with the church through Christ. This God purposed in himself, and it was his design in that dispensation which was to be accomplished by the sending of Christ in the fulness of time, i. e. at the exact time that God hath prefixed and settled.

6. That eternal inheritance is the great blessing with which we are blessed in Christ. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, ver. 11. Heaven is the inheritance, the happiness of which is a sufficient portion for a soul. It is conveyed in the way of an inheritance; being a gift of a father to his children. If children, then heirs. All the blessings that we have in hand, are but small if compared with the inheritance. What is laid out upon an heir in his minority, is nothing to what is reserved for him when he comes to age. Christians are said to have obtained this inheritance, as they have a present right to it; and even actual possession of it, in Christ their head and representative.

7. The seal and earnest of the Spirit are of the number of those blessings. We are said to be sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, ver. 13. The blessed Spirit is holy himself, and he makes us holy. He is called the Spirit of promise, as he is the promised Spirit. By him believers are sealed, that is, separated and set apart for God, and distinguished and marked as belonging to him. The Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, ver. 14. The earnest is part of payment, and it secures us the full sum. So is the gift of the Holy Ghost; all his influences and operations, both as a sanctifier and a comforter, are heaven begun, glory in the seed and bud. The Spirit's illumination is an earnest of everlasting light; sanctification is an earnest of perfect holiness, and his comforts are earnest of everlasting joys. He is said to be the earnest, until the redemption of the purchased possession. It may be called here the possession, because this earnest makes it as sure to the heirs as though they are already possessed of it; and it is purchased for them by the blood of Christ. The redemption of it is mentioned, because it was mortgaged and forfeited by sin, and Christ restores it to us, and so it is said to redeem it, an allusion to the law of redemption. Observe from all this, what a precious promise that is which secures the gift of the Holy Ghost to them who ask him.

The apostle mentions the great end and design of God in bestowing each one, and all these spiritual privileges; that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ, i. e. we to whom the gospel was first preached, and who were first converted to the faith of Christ, and to the placing our hope and trust in him. Note, *Seriously in grace is a prement.* Who were in Christ before me, says the Apostle, (Rom. xvi. 7.) and they who have for a longer time experienced the grace of Christ, are under more special obligations to glorify God. They should be strong in faith, and more eminently glorify him; but this should be the common end of all. For this we were made, and for this we were redeemed; this is the great design of our Christianity, and of God in all that he has done for us. Unto the praise of his glory, ver. 14. He intends that his grace and power, and other perfections should by this means become conspicuous and illustrious, and that the sons of men should magnify him.

15. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16. Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: 18. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know, what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. 19. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. 20. Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. 21. Far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. 23. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

We are come to the last part of this chapter, which consists of St. Paul's earnest prayer to God in behalf of these Ephesians: *We should pray for the persons for whom we give thanks.* Our apostle blesses God for what he had done for them, and then he prays that he would do more for them: He gives thanks for spiritual blessings, and prays for further supplies of them. For God will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. He has laid up these spiritual blessings for us in the hands of his Son the Lord Jesus; but then he has appointed us to draw them out, and fetch them in by prayer. We have no part nor lot in the matter, any further than we claim it by faith and prayer.

One inducement to pray for them was the good account he had of them, of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, ver. 15. Faith, in Christ, and love to the saints, will be attended with all other graces: Love to the saints, as such, and because they are such, must include love to God. They who love saints, as such, love all saints, how weak in grace, how mean in the world, how fruitful and pious ever some of them may be. Another inducement to pray for them was because they had received the earnest of the inheritance: This we may observe from the world's being connected with the preceding ones by the particle *wherefore*. Perhaps you will think, that having received the earnest, it should follow, therefore ye are happy enough, and need take no further care: You need not pray for yourselves, nor I for you. No, quite the contrary. *Wherefore—I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers*, ver. 16. While he blesses God for giving them the Spirit, he ceases not to pray that he would give unto them the Spirit, ver. 17. i. e. that he would give greater measures of the Spirit. Observe, *Even the best of Christians need to be prayed for*: And while we hear well of our Christian friends, we should think ourselves

* This passage has been understood by some in a very different sense, and with a special reference to the conversion of these Ephesians to Christianity. Those who have a mind to see what is said to this purpose, may consult Mr. Locke, and other well known writers, on the place.

ourselves obliged to intercede with God for them, that they may abound and increase more and more.

Now what is it that St. Paul prays for in their behalf? Why, not that they might be freed from persecution: or that they might possess the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world. But the great thing he prays for is the illumination of their understandings, and that their knowledge might increase and abound: he means it of a practical and experimental knowledge. The graces and comforts of the Spirit, are communicated to the soul by the enlightening of the understanding. In this way he gains and keeps possession. Satan takes a contrary way, he gets possession by the senses and passions: Christ by the understanding.

Observe, 1. Whence this knowledge must come; from the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 17. The Lord is a God of knowledge: And there is no sound, saving knowledge, but what comes from him, and therefore to him we must look for it, who is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, see ver. 3. And the father of glory. It is an Hebraism; God is infinitely glorious in himself; all glory is due to him from his creatures, and he is the author of all that glory, with which his saints are, or shall be invested. Now he gives knowledge, by giving the Spirit of knowledge; for the Spirit of God is the teacher of the saints. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation. We have the revelation of the Spirit in the word: But will that avail us, if we have not the wisdom of the Spirit in the heart? If the same Spirit who indited the sacred scriptures, do not take the veil from off our hearts, and enable us to understand and improve them, we shall be never the better. In the knowledge of him, or for the acknowledgment of him; not only a speculative knowledge of Christ, and of what relates to him, but an acknowledgment of Christ's authority by an obedient conformity to him, which must be by the help of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. This knowledge is first in the understanding. He prays, that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened, ver. 18. Observe, Those who have their eyes opened, and have some understanding in the things of God, have need to be more and more enlightened; and to have their knowledge more clear and distinct and experimental. Christ should not think it enough to have warm affections, but they should labour to have clear understandings; they should be ambitious of being knowing Christians, and judicious Christians.

2. What is it he more particularly desires they should grow in the knowledge of? 1. The hope of his calling; ver. 18. Christianity is our calling. There is a hope in this calling; for those who deal with God deal upon trust; and it is a desirable thing to know what this hope of our calling is, i. e. to have such an acquaintance with the immense privileges of God's people, and the expectations they had from God, and with respect to the heavenly world, as to be quickened thereby to the utmost diligence and patience in the Christian course. We ought to labour after, and pray earnestly for a clearer insight into, and a fuller acquaintance with, the great object of a Christian's hopes and exclamations. 2. The riches of the glory of his inheritance to the saints. Besides the heavenly inheritance prepared for the saints, there is a present inheritance in the Saints. For grace is glory begun, and holiness is happiness in the bud. There is a glory in this inheritance; riches of glory, rendering the Christian more excellent, and more truly honourable than all about him: And it is desirable to know this experimentally; to be acquainted with the principles, pleasures and powers of the spiritual and divine life. It may be understood of the glorious inheritance in, or among the saints in heaven, where God does, as it were, lay forth all his riches to make them happy and glorious, and where all that the saints are in possession of its transcendently glorious: As much, knowledge of which as is attained upon earth, is very desirable, and must be exceedingly entertaining and delightful. Let us examine then, by reading, contemplation, and prayer, to know as much of heaven as we can, that we may desiring and longing to be there. 3. The exceeding greatness of God's power towards them who believe, ver. 19. The practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, and of the omnipotence of divine grace, is absolutely necessary to a close and steady walking with him. It is a desirable thing to know experimentally the mighty power of that grace beginning and carrying on the work of faith to our souls. It is a difficult thing to bring a soul to believe fully in Christ, and to venture its all upon his righteousness, and upon the hope of eternal life. It is nothing less than an almighty power that will work this in us. The apostle speaks here with a mighty fluency and copiousness of expression, and yet at the same time, as if he wanted words to express the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power, that power which God exerts towards his people, and by which he raised Christ from the dead, ver. 20. That indeed was the great proof of the truth of the gospel to the world: But the transcript of that in ourselves, (i. e. our sanctification, and rising from the death of sin in conformity to Christ's resurrection) is the great proof to us. Though this cannot prove the truth of the gospel to another who knows nothing of the matter (there the resurrection of Christ is the proof) yet to be able to speak experimentally, as the Samaritans, we have heard him ourselves, we have felt a mighty change in our own hearts, which will make us able to say, with the fullest satisfaction, Now we believe, and are sure, that this is the Christ, the Son of God. Many understand the apostle here as speaking of that exceeding greatness of power, which God will exert for the raising the bodies of believers to eternal life, even the same mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him, &c. And how desirable a thing must it be to become acquainted with that power at length, by being raised out of the grave thereby unto eternal life?

Having said something of Christ and his resurrection, the apostle digresses a little from the subject he is upon, to make some further honourable mention of the Lord Jesus and his exaltation. He is set at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places, &c. ver. 20, 21. Jesus Christ is advanced above all, and he is set in authority over all, they being made subject to him. All the glory of the upper world, and all the powers of both worlds, are entirely devoted to him. The Father hath put all things under his feet, ver. 22. according to the promise, Psal. cx. 1. All creatures whatsoever are in subjection to him: that they must either yield him sincere obedience, or fall under the weight of his sceptre, and receive their doom from him. God GAVE him to be head over all things. It was a gift to Christ, considered as a mediator, to be advanced to such dominion and headship, and to such a mystical body prepared for him: And it was a gift to the Church to be provided with a head, endued with so much power and authority. God gave him to be the head [over all things:] He gave him all power both in heaven and in earth. The Father loves the Son, and hath given ALL things into his hands. But that which completes the comfort of this is, that he is the head over all things to the church, i. e. he is therefore intrusted with all power, that he may dispose of all the affairs of the providential kingdom in suberviency to the designs of his grace concerning his church. With this therefore we may answer the messengers of the nations, that the Lord hath founded Zion. The same power that supports the world, supports the church; and we are sure he loves his church, for it is his body, ver. 23. his mystical body, and he will care for it. It is the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Jesus Christ filleth all in all; he supplies all defects in all his members, filling them with his Spirit, and even with the fulness of God, chap. iii. 19.

and yet the church is said to be his fulness; because Christ as a mediator would not be complete if he had not a church. How would he be a king if he had not a kingdom? This therefore comes in to the honour of Christ, as mediator, that the church is his fulness.

CHAP. II.

This chapter contains an account. (1.) Of the miserable condition of these Ephesians by nature, ver. 1—3. and again, ver. 11, 12. (2.) Of the glorious change that was wrought in them by converting grace, ver. 4—10. and again, ver. 13. (3.) Of the great and mighty privileges that converted Jews and Gentiles both receive from Christ, ver. 14—32. The apostle endeavours to affect them with a due sense of the wonderful change which divine grace had wrought in them; and this is very applicable to that great change which the same grace works in all those who are brought into a state of grace: So that we have here a lively picture both of the misery of unregenerate men, and of the happy condition of converted souls; enough to awaken and alarm those who are yet in their sins, and to put them upon hastening out of that state; and to comfort and delight those whom God hath quickened, with a consideration of the mighty privileges with which they are invested.

1. **A**ND you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world; according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. 3. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

The miserable conditions of the Ephesians by nature, is here in part described. Observe,

1. That unregenerate souls are dead in trespasses and sins. All those are in their sins, are dead in sins; yet, in trespasses and sins: Which may signify all sorts of sins, habitual and actual; sins of heart and of life. Sin is the death of the soul. Whichever that prevails, there is a privation of all spiritual life. Sinners are dead in sin, being destitute of the principles and powers of spiritual life; and cut off from God, the fountain of life: And they are dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is said to be a dead man.

2. A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world, ver. 2. In the first verse he speaks of their internal state, in this of their outward conversation. Wherein, i. e. in which trespasses and sins, in time past ye walked, &c. i. e. you lived and behaved yourselves in such a manner as the men of the world are used to do.

3. We are by nature bond-slave to sin and Satan. They who walk in trespasses and sins, and according to the course of this world, walk according to the prince of the power of the air. The devil, or the prince of devils, is thus described. See Matt. xii. 24—26. The legions of apostate angels are as one power united under one chief: and therefore what is called the power of darkness elsewhere, is here spoken of in the singular number. The air is represented as the seat of his kingdom. And it was the opinion of the Jews and heathens both, that the air is full of spirits, and that there they exercise and exert themselves. The devil seems to have some power (by God's permission) in the lower regions of the air; there he is at hand to tempt men, and to do as much mischief to the world as he can: But it is the comfort and joy of God's people, that he who is head over all things to the church, hath conquered the devil, and has him in his chain: But wicked men are slaves to Satan, for they walk according to him, i. e. they conform their lives and actions to the will and pleasure of this great usurper. The course and tenor of their lives are according to his suggestions, and in compliance with his temptations; that they are subject to him, and are led captive by him at his will; whereupon he is called the God of this world, and the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. The children of disobedience are such as choose to disobey God, and to serve the devil; in these he works very powerfully and effectually. As the good Spirit's words that which is good in obedient souls, so this evil spirit works that which is evil in wicked men; and he now works, not only heretofore, but even since the world has been blessed with the light of the glorious gospel. The apostle adds, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, which words refers to the Jews, whom he signifies here to have been in the like sad and miserable condition by nature, and to have been as vile and wicked as the unregenerate Gentiles themselves, and whose natural state he further describes in the next words.

4. We are by nature drudges to the flesh, and to our corrupt affections, ver. 3. By fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, men contract that filthiness of flesh and spirit which the apostle exhorts Christians to cleanse themselves from, 2 Cor. vii. 1. That the fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, includes all that sin and wickedness that are acted in and by, both the inferior and the higher and nobler powers of the soul. We lived in the actual commission of all those sins which corrupt nature inclined us into. The carnal mind makes a man a perfect slave to his vicious appetite—Fulfilling [the wills] of the flesh, &c. so the word may be rendered; noting the efficacy of these lusts, and what power they have over those who yield themselves up to them.

5. We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. The Jews were so as well as the Gentiles; and one man is as much so as another by nature, i. e. not only by custom and imitation, but from the time when we begin to exist, and by reason of our natural inclinations and appetites. All men being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath; God is angry with the wicked every day. Our state and course are such as deserve wrath, and would end in eternal wrath, if divine grace did not interpose. What reason have sinners then to be looking out for that grace that will make of them, children of wrath, children of God and heirs of glory? Thus far the apostle has described the misery of a natural state in these verses, which we shall find him pursuing again in some following ones.

4 But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. 5. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) 6. And he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. 7. That in the ages to come he might shew the

the exceeding riches of his grace, in *his* kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. 8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God: not of work, lest any man should boast: 10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. 11. Wherefore remember that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Here the apostle begins his account for the glorious change that was wrought in them by converting grace; where observe,

1. By whom, and in what manner, it was brought about and effected. (1.) Negatively, *not of ourselves*, ver. 8. Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not the mere product of any natural abilities, or of any merit of our own. *Not of works lest any man should boast*, ver. 9. These things are not brought to pass by any thing done by us, and therefore all boasting is excluded: That he who glories must not glory in himself, but in the Lord. There is no room for any man's boasting of his own abilities and power; or as though he had done any thing that might deserve such immense favours from God. (2.) Positively; *But God who is rich in mercy*, &c. ver. 4. God himself is the author of this great and happy change, and his great love is the spring and fountal cause of it; from thence, he resolved to shew mercy. Love is his inclination to do us good, considered simply as creatures: *Mercy* respects us as apostate and as miserable creatures. Observe, God's eternal love of good will towards his creatures, is the fountain from whence all his mercies vouchsafed to us proceed; and that love of God is great love, and that mercy of his is rich mercy, inexhaustibly great and inexhaustibly rich. And then by grace we are saved, ver. 5 and by grace are ye saved through faith.—*It is the gift of God*, ver. 8. Note, Every converted sinner is a *saved sinner*, such are delivered from sin and wrath; they are brought into a state of salvation, and have a right given them by grace to eternal happiness. The grace that saves them is the free undeserved goodness and favour of God; and he saves them, not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, by means of which they come to partake of the great blessings of the gospel: and both that faith, and that salvation, on which it has so great an influence, are the gifts of God. The great objects of faith are made known by divine revelation and made credible by the testimony and evidence which God hath given us: and that we believe to salvation, and obtain salvation through faith, is entirely owing to divine assistance and grace; God has ordered all so, that the whole shall appear to be of grace.

Observe, 2. Wherein this change consists. In several particulars, answering to the misery of our natural state; some of which are enumerated in this section, and others are mentioned below. (1.) We who are dead are quickened, ver. 5. i. e. we are saved from the death of sin, and have a principle of spiritual life implanted in us. *Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul*. As death locks up the senses, seals up all the powers and faculties; so doth a state of sin as to any thing that is good; grace unlocks and opens all, and enlarges the soul. Observe, *A regenerate sinner becomes a living soul*; He lives a life of sanctification, being born to God; and he lives in the sense of the law, being delivered from the guilt of sin by pardoning and justifying grace. *He hath quickened us [together with Christ]*; our spiritual life results from our union with Christ; it is in him that we live: *Because I live ye shall live also*. (2.) We who are buried are raised up, ver. 6. What remains yet to be done, is here spoken of as though it were already passed: though indeed we are raised up in virtue of our union with him whom God hath raised from the dead. When he raised Christ from the dead, he did in effect raise up all true believers together with him, he being their head; and when he placed him at his right hand in heavenly places, he advanced and glorified them in and with him, their raised and exalted head and forerunner. *And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. This may be understood in another sense; sinners roll themselves in the dust; sanctified souls sit in heavenly places, are raised above the world; the world is as nothing to them, compared with what it has been, and compared with what the other world is. Saints are not only Christ's freemen, but they are accessors with him; by the assistance of his grace they have ascended with him above this world to converse with another, and they live in the constant expectation of it. They are not only servants to the best of masters in the best work: but they are exalted to reign with him; they sit upon the throne with Christ, as he is sit down with his Father on his throne.

3. Observe what is the great design and aim of God in producing and effecting this change: And this, (1.) with respect to others; that in the ages to come he must shew, &c. ver. 7. i. e. that he might give a specimen and proof of his great goodness and mercy, for the encouragement of sinners in future time. Observe, *That the goodness of God in converting and saving sinners heretofore, is a proper encouragement to others in after time to hope in his grace and mercy, and to apply themselves to these*. God having this in his design, poor sinners should take great encouragement from it. And what may we not hope for from such grace and kindness, from *riches of grace*, and from *exceeding riches of grace*, to which this change is owing? Through Christ Jesus, by and through whom God conveys all his favours and blessings to us: (2.) With respect to the regenerated sinners themselves; *For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, &c. ver. 10. It appears that all is of grace, because all our spiritual advantages are from God: *We are his workmanship*; he means in respect of the new creation: not only as men but as saints: *The new man is a new creature*: and God is its Creator. It is a new birth, and we are born or begotten of his will. In Christ Jesus, i. e. on the account of what he hath done and suffered, and by the influence and operation of his blessed Spirit. *Unto good works*, &c. i. e. The apostle having before ascribed this change to divine grace, in exclusion of works; lest he should seem thereby to discourage good works, he here observes, that though the change is to be ascribed to nothing of that nature, *for we are the workmanship of God*, yet God in this new creation has designed and prepared us for good works. *Created unto good works*, i. e. with a design that we should be fruitful in them. *Wherever God by his grace implants good principles, they are intended to be for good works*. Which God hath before ordained, i. e. decreed and appointed: or the words may be

read, *to which God hath before prepared us*, by blessing us with the knowledge of his will, and with the assistance of his Holy Spirit, and by producing such a change in us. *That we should walk in them*, i. e. glorify God by an exemplary conversation, and by our perseverance in holiness.

In the eleventh and twelfth verses the apostle proceeds in his account of the miserable condition of the Ephesians by nature. *Wherefore remember*, &c. ver. 11. q. d. You should remember what you have been, and compare it with what you now are, in order to humble yourselves, and to excite your love and thankfulness to God. Note, *Converted sinners ought frequently to reflect upon the sinfulness and misery of estate they were in by nature*. *Gentiles in the flesh*, i. e. lying in the corruption of your natures; and being destitute of circumcision, the outward sign of an interest in the covenant of grace. *Who are called uncircumcision by that*, &c. i. e. you were reproached and upbraided for it by the formal Jews, who made an external profession, and who looked no further than the outward ordinance. Note, *Hypocritical professors are wont to value themselves chiefly on their external privileges, and to reproach and despise others who are destitute of them*. The apostle describes the misery of their case in several particulars, ver. 12. *At that time*, i. e. while ye were Gentiles, and in an unconverted state, ye were, (1.) In a Christless condition, without the knowledge of the Messiah, and without any saving interest in him or relation to him. It is true of all unconverted sinners, all those who are destitute of faith, that they have no saving interest in Christ, and it must be a sad and deplorable thing for a soul to be without Christ. Being without Christ, they were, (2.) *Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, i. e. They did not belong to Christ's church, and had no communion with it, that being confined to the Jewish nation. *It is no small privilege to be placed in the church of Christ, and to share with the members of it in the advantages peculiar to it*. (3.) *They were strangers from the covenants of promise*. The covenant of grace hath ever been the same for substance, though having undergone various editions and improvements in the several ages of the church, it is called *covenant*, and the *covenants [of promise]* because it is made up of promises; and particularly contains the great promise of the Messiah, and of eternal life through him. Now the Ephesians in their Gentile sin, were *strangers from this covenant*, having never had any information or overtures of it; and all unregenerate sinners are *strangers* to it, as they have no interest in it. Those who are without Christ, and so have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant, have none in the promise of the covenant. (4.) *They had no hope*, i. e. beyond this life; no well grounded hope in God: no hope of spiritual and eternal blessings. They who are without Christ, and strangers from the covenant, can have no good hope, for Christ and the covenant are the ground and foundation of all the Christian's hopes. (5.) *They were in a state of distance and estrangement from God*. *Without God in the world*; not without some general knowledge of a deity, for they worshipped idols; but living without any due regard to him, any acknowledged dependence on him, and any special interest in him. *The words are atheists in the world*; for though they worshipped many gods, yet they were without the true God.

The apostle proceeds, ver. 13. further to illustrate the happy change that was made in their state. *But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off*, &c. They were far from Christ, from his church, from the promises, from the Christian hope, and from God himself; and therefore from all good; like the prodigal son in the far country: this has been represented in the preceding verses. *Unconverted sinners remove themselves at a distance from God, and God puts them at a distance*. He beheld the proud afar off. *But now in Christ Jesus*, &c. i. e. upon their conversion, by virtue of their union with Christ, and their interest in him by faith, *are made nigh*: They were brought home to God, received into the church, taken into the covenant, and possessed of all other privileges consequent upon these. Note, *The saints are a people near to God*. *Salvation is far from the wicked*; but God is a help at hand to his people, and this is by the blood of Christ, i. e. by the merit of his sufferings and death. *Every believing sinner owes his nearness to God, and his interests in his favours, to the death and sacrifice of Christ*.

14. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15. Having abolished in this flesh, the enmity even of the law of commandments continued in ordinances, for to make himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18. For through him we both have access by the Spirit unto the Father. 19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; 20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

We are now come to the last part of the chapter, which contains an account of the great and mighty privileges that converted Jews and Gentiles both received from Christ. The apostle here shews that they who were in a state of enmity are reconciled. Betwixt the Jews and the Gentiles there had been a great enmity; so there is betwixt God and every unregenerate man. Now Jesus Christ is our peace, ver. 14. He made peace by the sacrifice of himself; and came to reconcile, 1. Jews and Gentiles to each other. He made both one, by reconciling these two divisions of men, who were wont to malign, to hate, and to reproach each other before. He broke down the middle wall of partition, viz. the ceremonial law that made the great feud, and was the badge of the Jews' peculiarity; called the *partition wall*, by way of allusion to the partition in the temple, which separated the court of the Gentiles from that into which the Jews only had liberty to enter. Thus he abolished in his flesh the enmity, ver. 15. By his sufferings in the flesh, taking away the binding power of the ceremonial law so removing that cause of enmity and distance betwixt them; which is here called *the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, because it did enjoin a multitude of external rites and ceremonies, and consisted of many institutions and appointments about the outward parts of divine worship. *The legal ceremonies were abrogated by Christ, having their accomplishment in him*. By taking those out of the way, he formed one church of believers whether they had been Jews or Gentiles. Thus he made in himself of twain one

new men. He framed both these parties into one *new society*, or body of God's people, uniting them to himself as their common head; they being *renewed* by the Holy Ghost, and now concurring in a *new way* of godly worship: *So making peace*, i.e. betwixt these two parties who were so much at variance before. 2. There is an enmity betwixt God and sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, and Christ came to slay that enmity, and to reconcile them both to God, ver. 16. Sin breeds a quarrel betwixt God and men: Christ came to take up the quarrel, and to bring it to an end, by reconciling both Jews and Gentiles, now collected and gathered into one body, to a provoked and an offended God. And this *by the cross*; or by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; *Having slain the enmity thereby.* He being slain or sacrificed, slew the enmity that there was betwixt God and poor sinners. The apostle proceeds to illustrate the great advantage which both parties gain by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 17. Christ who purchased peace on the cross, *came*, partly in his own person, as to the Jews, who are said to have been *nigh*; and partly in his apostles, whom he commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, who are said to have been *far off*, in the sense that has been given before. *And preached peace*, or publishing the terms of reconciliation with God, and of eternal life. Note here, That *when the messenger of Christ delivered his truths, it is in effect the same as if he did it immediately himself.* He is said to preach by them; inasmuch that he who receiveth them receiveth him; and he who despiseth them (acting by virtue of his commission, and delivering his message) despiseth and rejecteth Christ himself. Now the effect of this peace is the access, which both Jews and Gentiles have unto God, ver. 18. *For through him*, &c. i. e. in his name, and by virtue of his mediation, *we both have an access*, i. e. admission into the presence of God, who is become the common reconciled Father of both; The throne of grace is erected for us to come to; and liberty of reproach to that throne is allowed us. Our access is *by the holy Spirit*; Christ purchased for us leave to come to God: and the Spirit gives us a heart to come, and strength to come, even grace to serve God acceptably. Observe, *We draw nigh to God, through Jesus Christ, by the help of the Spirit.* The Ephesians, upon their conversion, having such an access to God, as well as the Jews, and by the same Spirit the apostle tells them, *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners*, &c. ver. 19. This he mentions by way of opposition to what he had observed of them in their heathenism: They were now no longer *alien from the commonwealth of Israel*; and no longer what the Jews were wont to account all the nations. If the earth divides themselves, *ye are strangers to God*; but *fellow citizens with the saints*, and of the household of God, i. e. members of the church of Christ, and having a right to all the privileges of it. Observe here, That *the church is compared to a city*, and every converted sinner is free of it. It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the domestics, one of the family; a servant, and a child in God's house. In ver. 20. The church is compared to a building: The foundation of that building are the apostles and prophets. They may be so called in a secondary sense, Christ himself being the primary foundation; but we are rather to understand it of the doctrine delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New. It follows, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.* In him both Jews and Gentiles meet, and constitute one church; and Christ supports the building by his strength. *In whom all the building is framed together*, &c. ver. 21. i. e. All believers, of which it does consist, being united to Christ by faith, and among themselves by Christian charity *grow to an holy temple*, become a sacred society, in which there is much communion betwixt God and his people, as in the temple; they worshipping and serving him, he mantling himself unto them, they offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, and he dispensing his blessings and favours to them. Thus the building for the nature of it is *a temple, an holy temple*; For the church is the place which God hath chosen to put his name there; and it becomes such a temple, by grace and strength derived from himself, in the Lord. The universal church being built upon Christ as the foundation stone, and united in Christ as the corner-stone, comes at length to be glorified in him as the top-stone. *In whom you also are builded together*, &c. ver. 22. Observe, not only the universal church is called the temple of God, but particular churches; and even every true believer is a living temple, is an habitation of God through the Spirit. God dwells in all believers now; they being become the temple of God through the operations of the blessed Spirit; and his dwelling with them now is an earnest of their dwelling together with him to eternity.

C H A P. III.

This chapter consists of two parts. (1.) Of the account which St. Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, as he was appointed by God to be the apostle of the Gentiles, ver. 1—13. (2.) Of his devout and affectionate prayer to God for the Ephesians, ver. 14—22. We may observe it to have been very much the practice of this apostle to intermix with his instructions and councils, intercessions and prayers to God for those to whom he wrote, as knowing that all his instructions and teachings would be useless and vain, except God did co-operate with them and render them effectual. This is an example that all the mysteries of Christ should copy after; praying earnestly that the efficacious operations of the divine Spirit may attend their ministrations and crown them with success.

1. **F**OR this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles: 2. If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-wards: 3. How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, (as I wrote afore in few words. 4. Whereby when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.) 5. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: 6. That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7. Whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: 9. And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus

Christ. 10. To the intent that unto the principalities and power in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. 11. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12. In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. 13. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Here we have the account which St. Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself as he was appointed by God the apostle of the Gentiles.

1. We may observe that he acquaints them with the tribulations and sufferings which he endured in the discharge of that office, ver. 1. The first clause refers to the preceding chapter, and may be understood either of these two ways. For this cause either, (1.) For having preached the doctrine contained in the foregoing chapter, and for asserting that the great privileges of the gospel belong not only to the Jews, but to believing Gentiles also, though they are not circumcised: for this I am now a prisoner, but a prisoner of Jesus Christ, as I suffer in his cause and for his sake, and continuing his faithful servant, and the object of his special protection and care, while I am thus suffering for him. Observe, *Christ's servants, if they come to the prisoners, are his prisoners*; and he despiseth not his prisoner. He thinks never the worse of them for the ill character which the world gives them, or the evil treatment that they met with in it. Paul adhered to Christ, and Christ owned him when he was in the prison. For you Gentiles the Jews did therefore persecute and imprison him, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. We may learn hence, that the faithful ministers of Christ are to dispense his sacred truths, however disagreeable they may be to some, and whatever they themselves may suffer for doing so. Or, (2.) The word may be thus understood, For this cause, &c. viz. you are no more strangers and foreigners, &c. as chap. ii. 19. but are united to Christ, and admitted into communion with his church, I Paul, who am the prisoner of Jesus Christ, &c. pray that you may be enabled to do so. Thus thus favoured by God, and made partakers of his great privileges. To this purpose you find him expressing himself, ver. 13. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory*, contained in the several verses, interpreted and proceeded with what he says in this first verse. Observe, *Those who have received grace and signal favours from God, stand in need of prayer*, that they may improve and advance, and continue to act as becomes them. And being thus well as a prisoner, employed himself in such prayers to God in behalf of the Ephesians, we should learn that no particular sufferings of our own should make us so solicitous about ourselves, as to neglect the cases of others in our supplications and addresses to God.

He speaks again of his sufferings *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory*, ver. 13. While he was in prison he suffered much there; and though it was upon their account that he suffered, yet he would not have them discouraged nor dismayed at this, seeing God had done such great things for them by his ministry. What a tender concern was there for these Ephesians? The apostle seems to have been more solicitous lest they should be discouraged and sink upon his tribulations, than about what he himself endured: And to prevent this, he tells them, that *his sufferings were their glory*; and would be so far from being a real discouragement, if they duly considered the matter, that they ministered cause to them for glorying and for rejoicing; as this discovered the great esteem and regard which God bore to them, in that he not only sent his apostles to preach the gospel to them, but even to suffer for them, and to confirm the truths they delivered, by the persecutions they underwent. Observe, *Not only the faithful ministers of Christ themselves, but their people too, have some special cause for joy and glorying, when they suffer for the sake of dispensing the gospel.*

2. The apostle informs them of God's appointing him to the office; and eminently fitting and qualifying him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him.

God appointed him to the office. *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward*, ver. 2. They could not but have heard of this, and therefore he does not design to speak doubtfully of this matter. *Ey*, is sometimes an affirmative particle, and we may read it, *since you have heard*, &c. He styles the gospel *the grace of God* here, (as in other places) because it is the gift of divine grace to sinful men; and all the gracious overtures that it makes, and the joyful tidings that it contains, proceed from the rich grace of God: And it is the great instrument in the hands of the Spirit, by which God works grace in the souls of men. He speaks of the dispensation of the grace given to him: He means as he was authorised and commissioned by God to dispense the doctrine of the gospel: which commission and authority were given to him, chiefly for the service of the Gentiles, to you-ward. And again, speaking of the gospel, he says, *Whereof I was made a minister*, &c. ver. 7. Here he again asserts his authority. He was MADE a minister, he did not make himself such. He took not to himself that honour. And he was made such according to the gifts of the grace of God unto him. God did supply and furnish him for his work; and in the discharge of it did suitably assist and help him with all needful gifts and graces, both ordinary and extraordinary, and that by the effectual working of his power; in himself more especially; and also in great numbers of those to whom he preached; by which means his labours among them were successful. Observe, *That what God calls men to, he fits them for: and doth it with an almighty power.* There is an effectual working of divine power attending the gifts of divine grace.

As God appointed him to the office, so he did eminently qualify him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him: And he makes mention both of the mystery that was revealed, and of the revelation of it.

The mystery revealed is, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel, ver. 6. i. e. that they should be joint heirs with the believing Jews of the heavenly inheritance: and that they should be members of the same mystical body, i. e. be received into the church of Christ, and be interested in the gospel-promises, as well as the Jews; and particularly in that great promise of the Spirit. And this in Christ, i. e. being united to Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen; And by the gospel, i. e. in the times of the gospel, as some understand it; Or, by the gospel preached to them; which is the great instrument and means by which God works faith in Christ, as others. This was the great truth revealed to the apostle, viz. that God would call the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, and that without the works of the law.

Of the revelation of this truth, he speaks ver. 3, 4, 5. Where we may observe that the coalition of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church was a mystery, a great mystery; which was designed in the counsel of God before all worlds, but what could not be fully understood for many ages, till the accomplishment expounded the prophecies of it. It is called a mystery because the several circumstances and peculiarities of it (such as the time and manner,

manner, and means by which it should be effected) were concealed and kept secret in God's own breast, till by an immediate revelation he made them known to his servant. See Acts xxvi. 16, 17, 19. And it is called the mystery of Christ, because it was revealed by him. Gal. i. 12. and because it relates so very much unto him. Of this the apostle had given some hints afore, or a little before; i. e. in the preceding chapters. *Whereby when ye read; or, as those words may be read, Unto which attending: and it is not enough for us barely to read the scriptures, unless we attend unto them; and seriously consider and lay to heart what we read. Ye may understand my knowledge in the ministry of Christ; so as to perceive how God had fitted and qualified him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, which might be to them an evident token of his divine authority. This ministry, he says, in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, ver. 5. that is, it was not so fully and clearly discovered in the ages before Christ, as it is now revealed unto the prophets, i. e. of that age, the prophets of the New Testament, who were immediately inspired and taught by the Spirit. Let us observe, that the conversion of the Gentile world to the faith of Christ was an adorable mystery, and we ought to bless God for it. Who would have imagined that those who had been so long in the dark, and at so great a distance, should be enlightened with the marvellous light, and be made nigh? Let us learn from hence not to despair of the worst; of the worst of persons, and of the worst of nations. Nothing is too hard for divine grace to do: None so unworthy but God may please to confer great grace upon them. And how much are we ourselves interested in this affair; not only as we live in a time in which the mystery is revealed, but particularly as we are a part of the nations which in times past were foreigners and strangers, and lived in gross idolatry; but are now enlightened with the everlasting gospel, and partake of the promises of it?*

3. The apostle acquaints them how he was employed in this office, and that with respect to the Gentiles, and to all men. (1.) With respect to the Gentiles, he preached to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, ver. 8. Observe in this verse how humbly he speaks of himself; and how highly he speaks of Jesus Christ. (1.) How humbly he speaks of himself; *I am less than the least of all saints.* St. Paul, who was the chief of the apostles, calls himself less than the least of all saints, he means on the account of his having been formerly a persecutor of the followers of Christ. He was, in his own esteem, as little as could be, he speaks himself less than could be. Observe, *Those whom God advances to honourable employments, he humbles and makes low in their own eyes.* And, *where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other graces.* You may also observe in what a different manner the apostle speaks of himself, and of his office. While he magnifies that, he debases himself. Observe, *A faithful minister of Christ may be very humble, and think very meanly of himself, even when he thinks and speaks very highly and honourably of his sacred function.* (2.) How highly he speaks of Jesus Christ: *The unsearchable riches of Christ.* There is a mighty treasury of mercy, grace, and love, laid up in Christ Jesus, and that for Jews and Gentiles both. Or, the riches of the gospel are here spoken of as the riches of Christ; the riches which Christ purchased for, and bestows upon all believers: And they are unsearchable riches, which we cannot find the bottom of; and which human sagacity could never have discovered; and men could no other ways attain to the knowledge of them but by revelation. Now it was the apostle's business and employment to preach these unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles; and it was a favour he greatly valued, and looked upon it as an unspeakable honour to him. *Unto me is this grace given; this special favour God hath granted to such an unworthy creature as I am.* And it is an unspeakable favour to the Gentile world, that to them the unsearchable riches of Christ are preached. Though many remain poor, and are not enriched with these riches; yet it is a favour to have them preached among us, to have an offer of them made to us; and if we be not enriched with them, it is a long of ourselves. (2.) With respect to all men, ver. 9. His business and employment was to make all men see, i. e. to publish and make known to the whole world, *what is the fellowship of the mystery, i. e. that the Gentiles who have hitherto been strangers to the church, shall be admitted into communion with it: Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God; kept secret in his purpose; who created all things by Jesus Christ: as John i. 3. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore no wonder he saves the Gentiles as well as the Jews; for he is the common creator of them both: And we may conclude, that he is able to perform the work of their redemption, seeing he was able to accomplish the great work of creation. It is true, that both the first creation, when God made all things out of nothing, and the new creation, whereby sinners are made new creatures by converting grace, are of God by Jesus Christ. The apostle adds, *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, ver. 10.* This was one thing, among others, which God had in his eye in revealing this mystery, that the good angels, who have a pre-eminence in governing the kingdoms and principalities of the world, and who are endued with great power to execute the will of God on this earth (though their ordinary residence and place of abode is in heaven, may be informed, from what passes in the church, and is done in and by it, of the manifold wisdom of God, i. e. of the great variety with which God wisely dispenses things; or of his wisdom manifested in the many ways and methods he takes in ordering his church in the several ages of it, and especially in receiving the Gentiles into it. The holy angels who look into the mystery of our redemption by Christ, could not but take notice of this branch of that mystery, that among the Gentiles is preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. And this is according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, ver. 11. Some read the words [*κατά το πρόθετον του αιώνα*] thus according to the fore disposing of the ages which he made, &c. So Dr. Whitby, &c. In the first of ages (says the mentioned author) his wisdom seeing fit to give the promise of a Saviour to a fallen Adam: In the second age to typify and represent him to the Jews in sacred persons, rites, and sacrifices: And in the age of the Messiah, or the last age, to reveal him to the Jews, and preach him to the Gentiles. Others understand it, according to our translation, of the eternal purpose which God purposed to execute in and through Jesus Christ: The whole of what he has done in the great affair of man's redemption, being in pursuance of his eternal decree about that matter. The apostle having mentioned our Lord Jesus Christ, subjoins concerning him, *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him, ver. 12. i. e.* By, or through, whom we have liberty to open our minds freely to God, as to a Father, and a well-grounded persuasion of audience and of acceptance with him; and this by means of the faith we have in him as our great Mediator and Advocate. We may come with humble boldness to hear from God, knowing that the terror of the curse is done away: and we may expect to hear from him good words and comfortable. We may have access with confidence to speak to God, knowing that we have such a mediator between God and us, and such an advocate with the Father.**

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14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. 16. That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love 18. May be able to comprehend with all faints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; 19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. 21. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

We are now come to the second part of this chapter, which contains St. Paul's devout and affectionate prayer to God for his beloved Ephesians.

For this cause. This may be referred either to the immediately foregoing verse, *That he faint not, &c.* Or rather the apostle is here resuming what he begun at the first verse, from which he digressed in those which are interpolated. Observe to whom he prays, to God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which see chap. i. 3. Observe further, his outward posture in prayer, which was humble and reverent. *I bow my knees.* Note, *When we draw nigh to God, we should reverence him in our hearts; and express it in the most suitable and becoming behaviour and gesture.* And here having mentioned Christ, he cannot pass without an honourable mention of his love, ver. 15. The universal church hath a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. The Jews were wont to boast of Abraham as their father; but now Jews and Gentiles both are denominated from Christ; so some: While others understand it of the saints of heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and of saints on earth, who are going on in the works of grace here: Both the one and the other make but one family, one household; and from him they are named CHRISTIANS, as they really are such; acknowledging their dependence upon and their relation to Christ.

Observe what the apostle asks of God for these his friends. Spiritual blessings; which are the best blessings, and the most earnestly to be sought: and prayed for by every one of us, both for ourselves and for our friends.

1. *Spiritual strength* for the work and duty to which we are called, and in which we are employed. *That he would grant you according to the riches of his grace to be strengthened, &c.* The inner man is the heart or soul. To be strengthened with might, is to be mightily strengthened, much more than they were at present; to be endued with an high degree of grace, and spiritual abilities for the discharging duty, the resisting temptations, the enduring persecutions, &c. And the apostle prays that this may be according to the riches of his glory, or according to his glorious riches, i. e. answerable to that great abundance of grace, mercy and power, &c. which resides in God, and is his glory: And this by his Spirit, who is the immediate worker of grace in the souls of God's people. Observe from these things, that strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man is the best and most desirable strength; strength in the soul; the strength of faith and other graces; strength to serve God and to do our duty, and to persevere in our Christian course with vigour and with cheerfulness. And let us further observe, that as the work of grace is first begun, so it is continued and carried on by the blessed Spirit of God.

2. The indwelling of Christ in our hearts, ver. 17. Christ is said to dwell in his people, as he is always present with them by his gracious influences and operations. Observe, *That it is a desirable thing to have Christ dwell in our hearts:* and if the law of Christ be written there, and the love of Christ be shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. *Christ is an inhabitant in the soul of every good Christian.* Where his Spirit dwells, there he dwells, and he dwells in the heart by faith; by means of the continual exercise of faith upon him. Faith opens the door of the soul to receive Christ: faith admits him, and submits to him. By faith we are united to Christ, and have an interest in him.

3. The fixing of pious and devout affections in the soul. *That we bring rooted and grounded in love, i. e. steadfastly fixed in your love to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to all the saints, the beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Many have some love to God, and to his servants, but it is a flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it makes a great noise, but is gone presently. We should earnestly desire that good affections may be fixed in us; that we may be rooted and grounded in love. Some understand it of their being settled and established in the sense of God's love to them; which would inspire them with great ardors of holy love to him, and to one another. And how very desirable is it to have a settled fixed sense of the love of God and Christ to our souls, so as to be able to say with the apostle, at all times, *He has loved me!* Now the best way to attain this, is to be careful that we maintain a constant love to God in our souls; this will be the evidence of the love of God to us. *We love him, because he first loved us.* In order to this he prays,

4. For their experimental acquaintance with the love of Jesus Christ. The more intimate acquaintance we have with Christ's love to us, the more our love will be drawn out to him, and to those who are his, for his sake. *That you may be able to comprehend with all faints, &c. ver. 18, 19. i. e. more clearly to understand, and firmly to believe, the wonderful love of Christ to his, which the faints do understand and believe in some measure, and shall understand more hereafter.* Christians should not aim to comprehend above all faints; but be content that God deals with them, as he uses to do with those who love and fear his name: We should desire to comprehend with all faints, i. e. to have so much knowledge as the faints are allowed to have in this world. We should be ambitious of coming up with the first three; but not of going beyond what is the measure of the stature of other faints.

It is observable how magnificently the apostle speaks of the love of Christ. The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable. *The breadth, and length, and depth, and height.* By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ; the unsearchable riches of his love, which is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, to allude to Job xi. 7, 8. Some describe the particulars thus: By the breadth of it, we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men. By the length of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting. By the depth of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who are sunk into the depths of sin and misery. By its height its

its intitling, and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to comprehend this love. It is the character of all the saints that they do so; For they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ. And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, ver. 19. If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? Why we must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though after the best endeavours none fully comprehend it: In its full extent it passeth knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better perceived and known by Christians than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven.

5. He prays that they might be filled with all the fulness of God. It is an high expression: We dare not use it if we did not find it in the scriptures: It is like those other expressions, of being partakers of a divine nature: and of being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We are not to understand it of his father as God in himself: but of his fulness as a God in covenant with us, as a God to his people: Such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill every one to the utmost of his capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces which he sees they need. They who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, may be said to be filled with the fulness of God, according to their capacity; all which is in order to their arriving to the highest degree of the knowledge and enjoyment of God; and an entire conformity to him.

The apostle closes the chapter with a doxology, ver. 20, 21. It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour hath taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God; and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayer of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more. Open thy mouth never so wide, and he hath wherewithal to fill it. Note, In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency and almighty power. According to the power which worketh in us. As if he had said we have already had a proof of this power of God, in which he has wrought in us and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Whatever God gives of his fulness, he gives to experience his power.

Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellencies and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, That the seat of God's praises is in the church. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world, is from the church; a sacred society constituted for the glory of God: Every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, does concur in this work of praising God. The mediator of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from him to us though the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him, through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus throughout all ages, world without end: For he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church, Amen. So be it! And so it will certainly be.

C H A P. IV.

We have gone through the former part of this epistle, which consists of several important doctrinal truths, contained in the three preceding chapters. We enter now on the latter part of it, in which we have the most weighty and serious exhortations that can be given. We may observe, that in this (as in most others of St. Paul's epistles) the former part is doctrinal, and fitted to inform the minds of men in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel: The latter is practical, and designed for the direction of their lives and manners: All Christians being obliged to endeavour after soundness in faith, and regularity in life and practice. In what has gone before, we have heard of Christian privileges, which are matter of our comfort. In what follows, we shall hear of Christian duties, and what the LORD our God requires of us, in consideration of such privileges vouchsafed to us. The best way to understand the mysteries, and partake of the privileges, of which we have read before, is conscientiously to practise the duties prescribed to us in what follows: As on the other hand, a serious consideration and belief of the doctrines that have been taught us in the foregoing chapters, will be a good foundation on which to build the practice of the duties prescribed in those which are yet before us: Christian faith and Christian practice do mutually befriend each other.

In this chapter we have divers exhortations to important duties. (1.) One that is more general; ver. 1. (2.) An exhortation to mutual love, unity and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them, ver. 2—16. (3.) An exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of life, and that both more general, ver. 17—24. and in several particular instances, ver. 25. to the end.

I THEREFORE the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

This is a general exhortation to walk as becomes our Christian profession. St. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome; and he was the prisoner of the Lord, or in the Lord, which signifies as much as for the Lord. See of this, chap. iii. 1. He mentions this once and again, to shew that he was not ashamed of his bonds, well knowing that he suffered not as an evil doer: And likewise to recommend what he wrote to them, with a greater tenderness, and with some special advantages. It was a doctrine he thought worth suffering for, and therefore surely they should think it worthy their serious regard, and their dutiful observance. We have here the petition of a poor prisoner, one of Christ's prisoners. I therefore beseech you of the Lord beseech you, &c. Considering what God hath done for you, and to what a state and condition he has called you, as has been discoursed before; I now come with an earnest request to you (not to send me relief; or to use your interest for the obtaining my liberty: the first thing which poor prisoners are wont to solicit from their friends: But) that you would approve yourselves good Christians, and live up to your profession and calling: That ye walk worthy, &c. i. e. agreeable, suitable, and congruous to those happy circumstances into which the grace of God has brought you, whom he hath converted from heathenism to Christianity. Observe, Christians ought to accommodate themselves to the gospel, by which they are called, and to the glory to which they are called; both are their vocations. We are called Christians, we must answer that name, and live like Christians. We are called to God's kingdom and glory; that kingdom and glory therefore we must mind, and walk as become the heirs of them.

2. With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9. (Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets: and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers: 12. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: 15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ: 16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.

Here the apostle proceeds to more particular exhortations. Two he enlarges upon in this chapter, viz. To unity and purity, holiness and love, which Christians should very much study. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; if we be not faithful friends to all Christians, and sworn enemies to all sin.

This section contains the exhortation to mutual love, unity and concord: with the proper means and motives to promote them. Nothing is pressed upon us more earnestly in the scripture than this. Love is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Observe,

1. The means of unity: Lowliness, and meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love, ver. 2. By lowliness we are to understand humility, and the entertaining mean thoughts of ourselves, which is opposed to pride. By meekness, that excellent disposition of souls, which makes men unwilling to provoke others; and not easily to be provoked or offended with their infirmities; and it is opposed to angry resentments and peevishness. Long suffering implies a patient bearing of injuries without seeking revenge. And forbearing one another in love, signifies the bearing their infirmities out of a principle of love; and so as not to cease to love them on the account of these. The best Christians have need to bear one with another, and to make the best use of another; to provoke one another's graces and not their passions. We find much in ourselves, which it is hard to forgive ourselves; and therefore we must not think it much if we find that in others, which we think hard to forgive them: and yet we must forgive them as we forgive ourselves. Now without these things unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility; without that there will be no meekness, no patience nor forbearance; and without these no unity. Pride and passion break the peace, and make all the mischief. Humility and meekness, &c. restore the peace and keep it. Only by pride comes contention: Only by humility comes love. The more lowly mindedness, the more like mindedness. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, if we be not meek and lowly of heart: For he by whom we are called: he to whom we are called, was eminent for meekness and lowliness of heart, and hath commanded us therein to learn of him.

2. We have an account of the nature of that unity which the apostle prescribes. It is the unity of the Spirit, ver. 3. The seat of Christian unity is in the heart or spirit. It does not lie in one set of thoughts, nor in one form and mode of worship; but in one heart and one soul. This unity of heart and affection may be said to be of the Spirit of God; it is wrought by him, and is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This we should endeavour to keep. Endeavouring is a gospel-word. We must do our utmost. If others will quarrel with us, we must take all possible care not to quarrel with them. If others will despise and hate us, we must not despise and hate them. In the bond of peace. Peace is a bond, as it unites persons, and makes them live friendly one with another. A peaceable disposition and conduct binds Christians together; Whereas disorder and quarrel disband and disunite their hearts and affections. Many slender twigs bound together become strong. The bond of peace is the strength of society. Not that it can be imagined, that all good people, and all the members of societies, would be in every thing just of the same length, and the same sentiments, and the same judgment: But the bond of peace unites them all together, with a non obstante to those. As in a bundle of rods, they may be of different lengths and different strength; but when they are tied together by one bond, they are much stronger than any, even than the thickest and strongest were of themselves.

3. We have next the motives proper to promote this Christian unity and concord. The apostle urges several to persuade us to it.

(1.) Consider how many unities there are, that are the joy and glory of our Christian profession. There should be one heart: For there is one body, and one Spirit, ver. 4. Two hearts in one body would be monstrous. If there be but one body, all that belong to that body should have one heart. The catholic church is one mystical body of Christ, and all good Christians make up but one body incorporated by one charter, that of the gospel; animated by one Spirit, the same Holy Spirit, who by his gifts and graces, quickens, enlivens, and governs that body. If we belong to Christ we are all acted by one and the same Spirit, and therefore should be one. Even as you are called in one hope of your calling. Hope is here put for its object, the thing hoped for the heavenly inheritance; to the hope of which we are called. All Christians are called to the same hope of eternal life. There is one Christ that they all hope in, and one heaven, that they are all hoping for.

for: and therefore they should be of one heart. *One Lord*, ver. 5. i. e. Christ, the head of the church, to whom by God's appointment, all Christians are immediately subject. *One faith*, that is, the gospel, containing the doctrine of the Christian faith: or, it is the same grace of faith, (viz. faith in Christ) whereby all Christians are saved. *One baptism*, by which we profess our faith: being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: and so the same sacramental covenant, whereby we engage ourselves to the Lord Christ. *One God and Father of all*, ver. 6. *One God*, who holds all the true members of the church for his children; for he is the Father of all such by special relation; as he is the Father of all men by creation: And he is above all, by his essence, and with respect to the glorious perfections of his nature: and as he has dominion over all creatures and especially over his church. And through all; by his providence upholding and governing them. And in you all; in all believers, in whom he dwells, as in his holy temple, by his Spirit and special grace.

If then there be so many ones, it is pity but there should be one more; one heart or one soul.

(2.) Consider the variety of gifts that Christ has bestowed among Christians. But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Though the members of Christ's church agree in so many things; yet there are some things wherein they differ: But this should breed no difference of affection among them; since they are all derived from the same bountiful author, and designed for the same great ends. Unto every one of us Christians is given grace, some gift of grace, in some kind or degree or other, for the mutual help of one another. Unto everyone of us ministers is given grace; to some a greater measure of gifts, to others a lesser measure. The different gifts of Christ's ministers proved a great occasion of contention among the first Christians. One was for Paul, and another for Apollos. The apostle shews that they had no reason to quarrel about them; but all the reason in the world to agree in the joint use of them, for common edification; because all was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ, in such a measure as seemed best to Christ to bestow upon every one. Observe, All the ministers, and all the members of Christ, owe all the gifts and graces that they are possessed of to him. And this is a good reason why we should love one another, because to every one of us is given grace. All to whom Christ has given grace, and on whom he hath bestowed his gifts (though they are of different sizes, different names, and different sentiments, yet) ought to love one another.

The apostle takes this occasion to instance in some of the gifts which Christ bestowed. And that they were bestowed by Christ, he makes appear by those words of David, wherein he foretold this concerning him, *Psal. lxxviii. 18. Wherefore he saith, ver. 8. i. e. the Psalmist saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* David prophesied of the ascension of Christ; and the apostle descants upon it here, and in the three following verses. When he ascended up on high. We may understand the apostle both of the place, in to which he ascended in his human nature, that is, the highest heavens; and particularly of the state to which he was advanced, he being then highly exalted, and eminently glorified by his Father. Let us set ourselves to think of the ascension of Jesus Christ; That our blessed Redeemer being risen from the dead is gone to heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, which completed the proof of his being the Son of God. A great conqueror, when they rode in their triumphant chariots, used to be attended with the most illustrious of their captives led in chains, and were wont to scatter their largesses and bounty among the soldiers, and other spectators of their triumph: So Christ, when he ascended into heaven, as a triumphant conqueror, led captivity captive. It is a phrase used in the Old Testament, to signify a conquest over enemies; especially over such as formerly had led others captive; see *Judges v. 12.* Captivity is here put for captive, and signifies all our spiritual enemies, who brought us into captivity before. He conquered those who had conquered us, such as sin, the devil and death. Indeed, he triumphed over those on the cross; but the triumph was completed at his ascension, when he became Lord over all, and had the keys of death and hades put into his hands. And he gave gifts unto men; in the psalm it is, he received gifts for men. He received for them, that he might give to them a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly, he enriched his disciples with the gift of the Holy Ghost. The apostle thus speaking of the ascension of Christ, takes notice, that he descended first, ver. 2. As much as if he had said, when David speaks of Christ's ascension, he intimates the knowledge he had of Christ's humiliation on earth: For when it is said, that he ascended, this implies that he first descended. For what is it, but a proof or demonstration of his having done so? Into the lower parts of the earth; this may refer either to his incarnation, according to that of David, *Psal. cxxxix. 14.* My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth: Or, to his burial, according to that of *Psal. lxxiii. 9.* They that seek my soul to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. He calls his death (say some of the fathers) his descent into the lower parts of the earth. He descended TO the earth in his incarnation. He descended INTO the earth in his burial: As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly so was the Son of man in the heart of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, ver. 10. i. e. far above the airy and starry (which are the visible) heavens, into the heaven of heavens; that he might fill all things, i. e. all the members of his church, with gifts and graces suitable to their several conditions and stations. Observe, Our Lord humbled himself first, and then he was exalted. He descended first, and then ascended.

The apostle next tells us, what were Christ's gifts at his ascension: He gave some apostles, &c. ver. 11. Indeed he sent forth some of these before his ascension, *Matt. x. 1, 2—5.* But some were then added, *Acts i. 26.* And all of them were more solemnly installed, and publicly confirmed in their office, by his visible pouring forth the Holy Ghost in an extraordinary manner and measure upon them. Note, That the great gift that Christ gave to the church at his ascension, was that of the ministry of peace and reconciliation. The gift of the ministry is the fruits of Christ's ascension. And ministers have their various gifts, which are all given them by the Lord Jesus.

The officers which Christ gave to the church were of two sorts; extraordinary ones advanced to an higher office in the church: Such were apostles, prophets, and evangelists. The apostles were chief. These Christ immediately called, furnished them with extraordinary gifts, and the power of working miracles, and with infallibility in delivering his truth; And they having being the witnesses of his miracles and doctrine, he sent them forth to spread the gospel, and to plant and govern churches. The prophets seem to have been such as expounded the writings of the Old Testament, and foretold things to come. The evangelists were ordained persons, *2 Tim. i. 6.* whom the apostle took for their companions in travel, *Gal. ii. 1.* and sent them out to settle and establish such churches as the apostles themselves had planted, *Acts xix. 22.* and not being fixed to any particular place, they were to continue till recalled, *2 Tim. iv. 9.*

And then there are ordinary ministers employed in a lower and narrower

sphere; as pastors and teachers. Some take these two names to signify the office, implying the duties of ruling and teaching belonging to it. Others think they design two distinct offices, both ordinary, and of standing use in the church; and then pastors are such as are fixed at the head of particular churches, with a design to guide, instruct, and feed them in the manner appointed by Christ; and they are frequently called bishops and elders. And the teachers were such, whose work it was also to preach the gospel, and to instruct the people by way of exhortation. We see here, that it is Christ's prerogative to appoint what officers and offices he pleases in his church. And how rich is the church, that had at first such a variety of officers, and hath still such a variety of gifts! How kind is Christ to his church! How careful of it, and of its edification! When he ascended he procured the gift of the Holy Ghost: And the gifts of the Holy Ghost are various; some are greater; others have lesser measures; but all for the good of the body. Which brings to the third argument.

(3.) Which is taken from Christ's great end and design in giving gifts unto men. The gifts of Christ were intended for the good of his church, and in order to advance his kingdom and interest among men. All these being designed for one common end, is a good reason why all Christians should agree in brotherly love; and not envy one another's gifts. All are for the perfecting of the saints, ver. 12. i. e. according to the import of the original, to bring them into an orderly, spiritual state and frame, who had been as it were dislocated and disjointed by sin; and then to strengthen, confirm, and advance them therein; that so each, in his proper place and function, might contribute to the good of the whole. for the work of ministry; or, for the work of dispensation, i. e. that they might dispense the doctrines of the gospel, and successfully discharge the several parts of their ministerial function. For the edifying of the body of Christ, i. e. to build up the church which is Christ's mystical body, by increase of their graces, and an addition of new members. All are designed to prepare us for heaven. Till we all come, &c. ver. 13. The gifts and offices (some of them) which have been spoken of, are to continue in the church till the saints be perfected, which will not be, till they all come to the unity of the faith, i. e. till all true believers meet together, by means of the same precious faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God: by which we are to understand not a bare speculative knowledge, or acknowledging of Christ to be the Son of God and the great mediator; but such as is attended with appropriation and affection, with all due honour, trust, and obedience. Unto a perfect man, to our full growth of gifts and graces, free from those childish infirmities, that we are subject to in the present world. Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, i. e. so as to be Christians of a full maturity and ripeness in all the graces derived from Christ's fulness. Or, according to the measure of that stature which is to make up the fulness of Christ, which is complete his mystical body. Now we shall never come to the perfect man till we come to the perfect world. There is a fulness in Christ, and a fulness to be derived from him; and a certain stature of that fulness, and a measure of that stature, assigned in the counsel of God to every believer; and we never come to that measure till we come to heaven. God's children, as long as they are in this world, are in growing.

Dr. Lightfoot understands the apostle as speaking here of Jews and Gentiles knit in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; so making a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The apostle further shews in the following verses, what was God's design in his sacred institutions, and what effect they ought to have upon us. As,

(1.) That we henceforth be no more children, &c. ver. 14. i. e. That we may be no longer children in knowledge, weak in the faith, and inconstant in our judgments; easily yielding to every temptation, readily complying with every one's humour, and being at every one's beck. Children are easily imposed upon; we must take care of that; and of being tossed to and fro, like ships without ballast: and carried about, like clouds in the air with such doctrines as have no truth nor solidity in them, but nevertheless spread themselves far and wide; and are therefore compared to wind. But the flight of men; it is a metaphor taken from gamblers, and signifies the mischievous subtilty of seducers; and cunning craftiness, by which is meant their skillfulness in finding out ways to seduce and deceive: for it follows whereby they lie in wait to deceive, as in an ambush, in order to circumvent the weak and draw them from the truth. Note, They must be very wicked and ungodly men, who set themselves to seduce and deceive others into false doctrines and errors: The apostle describes them here as base men, using a great deal of devilish art and cunning, in order thereunto. And the best method we can take to fortify ourselves against such, is to study the sacred oracles, and to pray for the illumination and grace of the Spirit of Christ, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be established in it.

(2.) That we should speak the truth in love, ver. 15. or follow the truth in love; or be sincere in love, i. e. to our fellow Christians. While we adhere to the doctrine of Christ, which is the truth, we should live in love one with another. Love is an excellent thing; but we must be careful to preserve truth together with it. Truth is an excellent thing; yet it is requisite that we speak it in love, and not in contention. These two should go together, truth and peace.

(3.) That we should grow up into Christ in all things. Into Christ, so as to be more deeply rooted in him. In all things: In knowledge, love, faith, and all the parts of the new man. We should grow up towards maturity; which is opposed to the being children. Those are improving Christians who grow up into Christ. The more we grow into an acquaintance with Christ, faith in him, love to him, and dependence upon him; the more we shall flourish in every grace. He is the head, and we should thus grow that we may thereby honour our head. The Christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ.

(4.) We should be assisting and helpful one to another, as members of the same body, ver. 16. Where the apostle makes a comparison betwixt the natural body and Christ's mystical body, that body of which Christ is the head: And he observes, that as there must be communion and mutual communications of the members of the body among themselves, in order to their growth and improvement, so there must by mutual love and unity, together with the proper fruits of these, among Christians, in order to their spiritual improvement and growth in grace. From whom, says he, i. e. from Christ their head, who conveys influence and nourishment to every particular member, the whole body of Christians fitly joined together and compacted, i. e. being orderly and firmly united among themselves, every one in his proper place and station, by that which every joint supplieth, by the assistance which every one of the parts, thus united, gives to the whole: Or by the Spirit, faith, love, sacraments, &c. which (like the veins and arteries in the body) serve to unite Christians to Christ their head, and to one another as fellow-members. According to the effectual working in the measure of every part. That is, say some, according to the power which the Holy Ghost exerts to make God's appointed means effectual for this great end; in such a measure as Christ judges to be sufficient and proper for every member, according to its respective place and office in the body. Or as others, according to the power of Christ, who as the head influenceth & enliveneth

enliveneth every member : Or according to the effectual working of every member, in communicating to others of what it hath received, nourishment is conveyed to all in their proportions, and according to the state and exigence of every part, *maketh increase of the body*, i. e. such an increase as is conveniently for the body. Observe, *Particular Christians receive their gifts and graces from Christ for the sake and benefit of the whole body. Unto the edifying of itself in love.* We may understand this two ways. Either that all the members of the church may attain unto a greater measure of love to Christ and to one another. Or that they are moved to act in the manner mentioned, from love to Christ and to one another. Observe, that *mutual love among Christians is a great friend to spiritual growth.* It is in love, that the body edifies itself. Whereas, *A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.*

17. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart : 19. Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20. But ye have not so learned Christ : 21. If so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus : 22. That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust : 23. And be renewed in the Spirit of your mind : 24. And that he ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour : for we are members one of another. 26. Be ye angry, and sin not ; let not the sun go down upon your wrath : 27. Neither give place to the devil. 28. Let him that stole steal no more : but rather let him labour working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31. Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you with all malice. 32. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The apostle having gone through his exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, in the foregoing verses ; there follows in these an Exhortation to Christian purity and holiness of heart and life ; and that both more general, ver. 17—24. and in several particular instances, ver. 25—32. This is solemnly introduced : *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, i. e.* seeing the matter is as above described : seeing you are members of Christ's body and partakers of such gifts : this I urge upon your consciences, and bear witness to as your duty in the Lord's name, and by virtue of the authority I have derived from him. And then, the more general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life begins thus : *that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, &c. i. e.* that for the time to come you do not live, and behave yourselves as ignorant and unconverted heathens do, who are wholly guided by an understanding employed about vain things, their idols, and their worldly possessions ; things which are so very profitable to their souls, and which will deceive their expectations. *Converted Gentiles must not live as unconverted Gentiles do.* Though they live among them, they must not live like them. Here the apostle takes occasion to describe the wickedness of the Gentile world, out of which regenerate Christians were snatched as brands out of the burning.

1. Their understandings were darkened, ver. 18. They were void of all saving knowledge ; yea ignorant of many things concerning God, which the light of nature might have taught them. They sat in darkness, and they loved it rather than light. And by their ignorance they were alienated from the life of God : They were estranged from, and had a dislike and an aversion to a life of holiness ; which is not only that way of life which God requires and approves of, and by which we live to him ; but which resembles God himself, in his purity, righteousness, truth, and goodness. Their wilful ignorance was the cause of their estrangement from this life of God, which begins in light and knowledge. *Gross and affected ignorance is destructive to religion and godliness.* And what was the cause they were thus ignorant ? it was because of the blindness, or the hardness of their heart. It was not because God did not make himself known to them by his works : but because they would not admit the instructive rays of the divine light. They were ignorant because they would be so. Their ignorance proceeded from their obstinacy, and the hardness of their hearts ; they resisting the light, and rejecting all the means of illumination and knowledge.

2. Their consciences were debauched and seared. *Who being past feeling,* ver. 19. They had no sense of their sin, or of the misery and danger of their case by means of it ; whereupon they gave themselves over unto lasciviousness. They indulged themselves in their filthy lusts, and yielding themselves up to the dominion of these, they became the slaves and drudges of sin and the devil ; working all uncleanness with greediness. They made it their common practice to commit all sorts of uncleanness, and even the most unnatural and monstrous sins, and that with insatiable desires. Observe, *When man's conscience is once seared, there are no bounds to their sins.* When they set their hearts upon the gratification of their lusts, what can be expected but the most abominable sensuality and lewdness ; and that their horrid enormities will abound !

This was the character of the Gentiles ; but these Christians must distinguish themselves from such Gentiles : *Ye have not so learned Christ,* ver. 20. It may be read, *But ye do so ; ye have learned Christ.* *These who have learned Christ, are saved from that darkness and defilement which others lie under ; and as they know more, they are obliged to live in a better manner than others.* It is a good argument against sin, that we have not so learned Christ. Learn Christ ! is Christ a book, a lesson, a way, a trade ? The meaning is, ye have not so learned Christianity : the doctrines of Christ, and

the rules of life prescribed by him. Not so, as to do as others do. *If so be* or since, *that ye have heard him,* ver. 21. i. e. have heard his doctrine preached by us, and have been taught by him, i. e. inwardly and effectually by his Spirit. Christ is the lesson, we must learn Christ ; and Christ is the teacher : we are taught by him. *As the truth is in Jesus.* This may be understood two ways ; either, (1.) You have been taught the real truth, as held forth by Christ himself, in his doctrine and in his life. Or, (2.) Thus the truth has made such an impression on your hearts, in your measure, as it did upon the heart of Jesus. *The truth of Christ then appears in its beauty and power, when it appears as in Jesus.*

Another branch of the general exhortation follows in those words. *That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, &c. ver. 22—24.* This is a great part of the doctrine which has been taught you, and that you have learned. Here the apostle expresses himself in metaphors taken from garments. The principles, habits, and dispositions of the soul must be changed, before there can be a saving change of the life. There must be sanctification ; which consists of these two things.

1. *The old man must be put off.* The corrupt nature is called a man, because, like the human body, it consists of divers parts, mutually supporting, and strengthening one another. It is the old man, as old as Adam, from whom we derived it ; it is bred in the bone, and we brought it into the world with us : it is subtil, as an old man ; but in all God's saints decaying and withering as an old man ; and ready to pass away. It is said to be corrupt ; for sin in the soul is the corruption of its faculties : and where it not mortified, it grows daily worse and worse, and so tends to destruction. According to the deceitful lusts. *Sinful inclinations and desires are deceitful lusts :* they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable and betray men into destruction, if they are not subdued and mortified. These therefore must be put off, as an old garment that we would be ashamed to be seen in ; i. e. they must be subdued and mortified. These lusts prevailed against them in their former conversation, that is, during their state of unregeneracy and heathenism.

2. *The new man must be put on.* It is not enough to shake off corrupt principles ; but we must be acted by gracious ones. We must embrace them, espouse them, and get them written on our hearts : it is not enough to cease to do evil ; but we must learn to do well. *Be renewed in the Spirit of your mind,* ver. 23. i. e. use proper and prescribed means in order to have the mind, which is a spirit, renewed more and more. And that ye put on the new man, ver. 24. By the new man, is meant the new nature, the new creature, which is acted by a new principle, even regenerating grace, enabling a man to lead a new life ; that life of righteousness and holiness which Christianity requires. The new man is created, or produced out of confusion and emptiness, by God's almighty power, whose workmanship it is ; truly excellent and beautiful. After God, in imitation of him, and in conformity to that grand exemplar and pattern. The loss of God's image upon the soul, was both the sinfulness and misery of man's fallen state ; and that resemblance which it bears to God, is the beauty, the glory, and the happiness of the new creature. In righteousness towards man, including all the duties of the second table ; and in holiness towards God, signifying a sincere obedience to the commands of the first table : true holiness, in opposition to the outward and ceremonial holiness of the Jews. We are said to put on this new man, when in the use of all God's appointed means we are endeavouring after this divine nature, this new creature.

This of the new general exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life. The apostle proceeds to some things more particular. Because general are not so apt to affect, we are told what are those particular limbs of the old man, that must be mortified ; those filthy rags of the old nature that must be put off ; and what the peculiar ornaments of the new man, wherewith we should adorn our Christian profession.

1. Take heed of lying, and be ever careful to speak the truth, ver. 25. *Wherefore &c. i. e.* since you have been so well instructed in your duty, and are under such obligations to discharge it ; let it appear in your future behaviour and conduct, that there is a great and real change wrought in you : particularly by putting away lying ; which sin the heathens were very guilty of, affirming that a profitable lie was better than a hurtful truth : and therefore the apostle exhorts them to cease from lying, i. e. from every thing that is contrary to truth. This is a part of the old man that must be put off ; and that branch of the new man, that must be put on in opposition to it, is speaking the truth in all our converse with others. It is the character of God's people, that they are children who will not lie, who dare not lie, who hate and abhor lying. All who have grace, make conscience of speaking the truth, and would not tell a deliberate lie for the greatest gain and benefit to themselves. The reason here given for veracity is, *We are members one of another.* Truth is a debt we owe one another. And if we love one another, we shall not deceive nor lie one to another. We belong to the same society or body, which falsehood and lying tend to dissolve : and therefore we should avoid that, and speak truth. Observe, *That lying is a very great sin : a peculiar violation of the obligations which Christians are under, and very injurious and hurtful to Christian society.*

2. Take heed of anger and ungoverned passions. *Be ye angry and sin not,* ver. 26. This is borrowed from the LXX translation of Psalm. iv. 2. where we render it, *Stand in awe, and sin not.* Here is an easy concession ; for as such we should consider it rather than as a command. *Be ye angry :* This we are apt enough to be, God knows. But we find it difficult enough to observe the restriction, *and sin not.* If ye have a just occasion to be angry at any time see that it be without sin ; and therefore take heed of excess in your anger. *If he would be angry and sin not* (says one) *we must be angry at nothing but sin.* And we should be more jealous for the glory of God than for any interest or reputation of our own. One great and common sin, in anger is to suffer it to burn into wrath, and then to let it rest ; and therefore we are here cautioned against that. If you have been provoked, and your spirits greatly discomposed ; and if you have bitterly resented any affront that has been offered : before night calm and quiet your spirits, be reconciled to the offender, and let all be well again. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* If it burn into wrath and bitterness of spirit ; O see to it that you suppress it speedily. Observe, *Though anger in itself is not sinful, yet there is the utmost danger of its becoming so, if it be not carefully watched, and speedily suppressed.* And therefore, though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, it rests only in the bosom of fools. Neither give place to the devil, ver. 27. *Then who persevere in sinful anger and in wrath, let the devil into their hearts ;* and suffer him to gain upon them, till he brings them to malice, mischievous machinations, &c. *Neither giving place to the calumniator, or the false accuser ;* so some read the words, i. e. let your ears be deaf to whispers, tale-bearers, and slanderers.

3. We are here warned against the sin of stealing, the breach of the eight commandment : and advised to honest industry and to beneficence. *Let them that stole, steal no more,* ver. 28. It is a caution against all manner of wrong-doing, by force or fraud. Let those of you, who in time of your Gentilism, have been guilty of this enormity, be no longer guilty of it. But we must not only take heed of the sin, but conscientiously abound in the opposite duty. Not only not steal, but rather let him labour, working with his

his hands the thing that is good. Idleness makes thieves. So Chrysostom *το γαρ πλεονεξία εστιν κλεψικον* Stealing is the effect of idleness. They who will not work, and who are ashamed to beg, expose themselves greatly to temptations to thievery. Men should therefore, be diligent and industrious, not in any unlawful way, but in some honest calling. Working the thing which is good Industry in some honest way, will keep people out of temptation of doing wrong. But there is another reason why men ought to be industrious, viz. that they may be capable of doing some good; as well as that they may be preserved from temptation. That he may have to give to him that needeth. They must labour not only that they live themselves, and live honestly; but that they may distribute for supplying the wants of others. Observe, Even those who get their living by their labour should be charitable out of their little to those who are disabled for labour. So necessary and incumbent a duty is it to be charitable to the poor, that even labourers and servants, and those who have but little for themselves, must cast their mite into the treasury. God must have his dues, and the poor are his receivers. Observe further, That those aims that are like to be acceptable to God, must not be the produce of unrighteousness and robbery, but of honesty and industry. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.

4. We are here warned against corrupt communication; and directed to that which is useful and edifying, ver. 29. Filthy and unclean words and discourse are poisonous and infectious as putrid rotten meat. They proceed from, and prove a great deal of corruption in the heart of the speaker, and tend to corrupt the minds and manners of others who hear them: and therefore Christians should beware of all such discourse. It may be taken, in general, for all that which provokes the lusts and passions of others. We must not only put off corrupt communication, but put on that which is good to the use of edifying. That great use of speech is to edify those with whom we converse. Christians should endeavour to promote an useful conversation: That it may minister grace unto the hearers, i.e. that it may be good for and acceptable to the hearers; either in the way of information, counsel, pertinent reproof, or the like. Observe, It is the great duty of Christians, to take care that they offend not with their lips; and that they improve discourse and converse, as much as may be, for the good of others.

5. Here is another caution against wrath and anger: And further advice to mutual love and kindly disposition towards each other, ver. 31, 32. By bitterness, wrath, and anger, are meant violent inward resentment and displeasure against others: And by clamour, big words, loud threatenings, and other intemperate speeches, by which that bitterness, wrath and anger do vent themselves. Christians should not entertain these vile passions in their hearts: nor be clamorous with their tongues. Evil speaking signifies all railing, reviling, and reproachful speeches against such as we are angry with. And by malice we are to understand that rooted anger which prompts men to design and to do mischief to others.

The contrary to all this follows. Be ye kind to one another: Which implies the principle of love in the heart, and the outward expression of it, in an affable, humble, courteous behaviour and carriage. It becomes the disciples of Jesus to be kind one to another; as those who have learned and would teach the art of obliging. Tender-hearted, i.e. merciful, and having a tender sense of the distresses and sufferings of others, so as to be quickly moved to compassion and pity. Forgiving one another. Occasions of difference will happen among Christ's disciples; and therefore they must be placable and ready to forgive, therein resembling God himself, who for Christ's sake hath forgiven them, and that more than they can forgive one another. Note, With God there is forgiveness, and he forgives sin for the sake of Jesus Christ, and on the account of that atonement which he hath made to divine justice. Note again, That they who are forgiven of God, should be of a forgiving spirit, and that they should forgive even as God forgives, sincerely and heartily, readily and cheerfully, universally and for ever, upon the sinner's sincere repentance, as remembering that they pray, Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us. Now,

We may observe concerning all these particulars that the apostle has insisted on, that they belong to the second table: From whence Christians should learn the strict obligations they are under to the duties of the second table: and that he who does not conscientiously discharge them, can never fear nor love God in truth and in sincerity, whatever he may pretend to.

In the midst of these exhortations and cautions the apostle interposes that general one, And grieve not the holy spirit of God, ver. 30. And by looking to what precedes, and to what follows, we may see what it is that grieves the spirit of God. In the verse before it is intimated, that all lewdness and filthiness, lying and corrupt communications that stir up filthy appetites and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. In what follows it is intimated, that those corrupt passions of bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, evil-speaking, and malice, do grieve this good Spirit: By which we are not to understand as though that blessed being could properly be grieved or vexed as we are: But the design of the exhortation is, that we act not towards him in such a manner as is wont to be grievous and disquieting to our fellow-creatures: We must not do that which is contrary to his holy nature and his will: we must not refuse to hearken to his counsels, nor rebel against his government; which things would provoke him to act towards us, as men are used to do towards them with whom they are displeased and grieved; withdrawing themselves and their wonted kindness from such, and abandoning them to their enemies. O provoke not the blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence, and his gracious influences from you! It is a great good reason why we should not grieve him, because by him we are sealed unto the day of redemption. There is to be a day of redemption; the body is to be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection-day, and then God's people will be delivered from all the effects of sin, as well as from all sin and misery which they are not till rescued out of the grave: And then their full and complete happiness doth commence. All true believers are sealed to that day. God has distinguished them from others, having set his mark upon them: And he gives them the earnest and assurance of a joyful and a glorious resurrection: And the Spirit of God is the seal. Wherever that blessed Spirit is as a sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of the redemption-day; and we should be undone, should God take away his holy Spirit from us.

C H A P. V.

We had several important exhortations in the close of the foregoing chapter, and they are contained in this: Particularly, (1.) We have here an exhortation to mutual love and charity, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Against all manner of uncleanness: With proper arguments and remedies proposed against such sins; and some further cautions are added; and other duties recommended, ver. 3—20. (3.) The apostle directs to the conscientious discharge of the relative duties, from ver. 21. throughout this, and in the beginning of the next chapter.

1. **B**E ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

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Here we have the exhortation to mutual love or to Christian charity. The apostle had been insisting on this in the former chapter; and particularly in the last verses of it, to which the particle *therefore* refers, and connects what he had said there, with what is contained in these verses, thus: Because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you *therefore* be ye followers of God, or imitators of him, for so the word signifies. Pious persons should imitate the God whom they worship, as far as he has revealed himself as imitable by them. They must conform themselves to his example, and have his image renewed upon them. This puts a great honour upon practical religion, that it is the imitation of God. We must be holy as God his holy, merciful as he is merciful, perfect as he is perfect. But there is no one attribute of God more recommended to our imitation than that of his goodness. Be ye imitators of God, or resemble him in every grace and especially in his love and in his pardoning goodness. God is love, and they that dwell in love dwell in God, and God in them. Thus he has proclaimed his name, Gracious and merciful, and abundant in goodness. As dear children. As children (who are wont to be greatly beloved by their parents) do usually resemble them in the lineaments and features of their faces, and in the dispositions and qualities of their mind: Or as becomes the children of God, who are beloved and cherished by their heavenly Father. Children are obliged to imitate their parents in what is good; especially when dearly beloved by them. The character that we bear of God's children, obliges us to resemble him, especially in his love and goodness, in his mercy and readiness to forgive. And they only are God's dear children who do imitate him in these. It follows and walk in love, ver. 2. This Godlike grace should conduct and influence our whole conversation, which is meant by walking in it. It should be the principle from which we act, it should direct the ends at which we aim. We should be more careful to give proof of the sincerity of our love one to another. As Christ also hath loved us. Here the apostle directs us to the example of Christ, whom Christians are obliged to imitate, and in whom we have an instance of the most free and generous love that ever was; that great love wherewith he hath loved us. We are all joint-sharers in that love, and partakers of the comfort of it, and therefore should love one another; Christ having loved us all, and given such proof of his love to us: For he hath given himself for us. The apostle designedly enlargeth on the subject; for what can yield us more delightful matter for contemplation than this? Christ gave himself to die for us; and the death of Christ was the great sacrifice of atonement. An offering and a sacrifice to God; or an offering, even a sacrifice: A propitiatory sacrifice to expiate our guilt, which had been prefigured in the legal oblations and sacrifices: and this for a sweet-smelling savour. Some observe, that the sin-offerings were never said to be of a sweet-smelling savour: But this is said of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. As he offered himself with a design to be accepted of God; so God did accept, was pleased with and appealed by that sacrifice. Note, As the sacrifice of Christ was efficacious with God; so his example should be prevailing with us, and we should carefully copy after it.

3. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints: 4. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8. For ye were sometimes darkness but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. 9. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth); 10. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13. But all things that are reprov'd, are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. 14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. 16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess: but be filled with the Spirit. 19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. 20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses contain a caution against all manner of uncleanness, with proper arguments and remedies proposed: And some further cautions are added, and other duties recommended. Filthy lusts must be suppressed, in order to the supporting of holy love. Walk in love, and shun fornication and all uncleanness. Fornication is folly committed between unmarried persons. All uncleanness includes all other sorts of filthy lusts, which were too common among the Gentiles. Or covetousness: which being thus connected, and mentioned as a thing which should not be once named, some understand it, in the chaste style of the scripture, of exorbitant unnatural lust: While others take it, in the more common sense, for an immoderate desire of gain, or an insatiable love of riches, which is spiritual adultery: For by this the soul which was espoused to God goes astray from him, and embraceth the bosom of a stranger; and therefore carnal worldlings are called adulterers. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Now these sins must be dreaded and detested in the highest degree. Let it not be once named among you, i.e. never in any way of approbation; and without abhorrence, as becometh saints, i.e. holy persons, who are separated from the world and dedicated unto God. The apostle not only cautions against the gross acts of sin, but against what some may be apt to make light of, and think to be excusable. Neither filthiness, ver. 4. By which may be understood all wanton and unseemly gestures and behaviour

behaviour. *Nor foolish talking*, i. e. obscene and lewd discourse; or more generally such vain discourse, as betrays much folly and indiscretion, and is far from edifying the hearers. *Nor jesting*. The Greek word *εὐπαιδεία*, is the same which Aristotle in his Ethics, makes a virtue of; pleasantness of conversation. And there is, no doubt, an innocent and inoffensive jesting, which we cannot suppose the apostle does here forbid. Some understand him of such scurrilous and abusive reflections, as tend to expose others, and to make them ridiculous. This is bad enough: But the context seems to restrain it to such pleantry of discourse as is filthy and obscene; which he may also design by that *corrupt*, or putrid and rotten communication that he speaks of, chap. iv. 29. Of these things he says they are *not convenient*. Indeed there is more than inconvenience, even a great deal of mischief in them. They are so far from being profitable, that they pollute and poison the hearers. But the meaning is, those things do not become Christians, and are very unsuitable to their profession and character. Christians are allowed to be cheerful and pleasant: but they must be merry and wise. The apostle adds, *but rather giving of thanks*: So far let the Christian's way of mirth be from that of obscene and prophane wit, that he delight his mind, and make himself cheerful by a grateful remembrance of God's goodness and mercy to him, and by blessing and praising him on the account of these. Note, (1.) *We should take all occasions to render thanksgivings and praises to God for his kindness and favours to us.* (2.) *A reflection on the grace and goodness of God to us, with a design to excite our thankfulness to him, is proper to refresh and delight the Christian's mind, and to make him cheerful.* Dr. Hammond thinks that *εὐχαριστία*, may signify gracious, pious, religious discourse in the general: by way of opposition to what the apostle condemns. Our cheerfulness, instead of breaking out into what is vain and sinful, and a profanation of God's name, should express itself as becomes Christians, and in what may tend to his glory. If men did abound more in good and pious expressions, they could not be so apt to utter ill and unbecoming words; For shall *blessing and cursing*, lewdness and thanksgivings, proceed out of the same mouth? To fortify us against the sins of uncleanness, &c. the apostle urges several arguments, and prescribes several remedies, in what follows.

1. He urges several arguments. As,

(1.) Consider that these are sins which shut persons out of heaven. For *this ye know*, &c. ver. 5. They knew it, being informed of it by the Christian religion. By a *covetous man* some understand a lewd, lascivious libertine, who indulges himself in those vile lusts which were accounted certain marks of an heathen and an idolater. Others understand it in the common acceptance of the word; and such a man is an idolater, because there is spiritual idolatry in the love of this world. As the epicure makes a god of his belly; so the covetous makes a god of his money; sets those affections upon it, and places that hope, confidence, and delight in worldly good, which should be reserved for God only. He serves mammon instead of God. Of these persons it is said, that they *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*. That may be, the kingdom of Christ who is God; or the kingdom which is God's by nature, and Christ's as he is mediator: the kingdom which Christ hath purchased, and which God bestows. Heaven is here described as a kingdom, (as frequently elsewhere) with respect to its eminency and glory, its fulness and sufficiency, &c. In this kingdom, the saints and servants of God have an inheritance: For it is the inheritance of the saints in light. But those who are impenitent, and allow themselves either in the lusts of the flesh or the love of the world, are not Christians indeed, and so belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they ever come to the kingdom of glory. Let us then be excited to be on our guard against those sins which would exclude and shut us out of heaven.

(2.) These sins bring the wrath of God upon those who are guilty of them. *Let no man deceive you with vain words*, &c. ver. 6. Let none flatter you, as though such things were tolerable, and to be allowed of in Christians: or as though they were not very provoking and offensive unto God; or as though you might indulge yourselves in them, and yet escape with impunity. These are *vain words*. Observe, *they who flatter themselves and others with hopes of impunity in sin, do but put a cheat upon themselves and others*. Thus Satan deceived our first parents with *vain words*, when he said to them, *Ye shall not surely die*. They are *vain words* indeed: for those who trust to them will find themselves wretchedly imposed upon, for *because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*. By *children of disobedience* may be meant the Gentiles, who disbelieved, and refused to comply with and to submit themselves to the gospel: Or, more generally, all obstinate sinners, who will not be reclaimed, but are given over to disobedience. *Disobedience* is the very malignity of sin. And it is by an usual Hebraism that such sinners are called *children of disobedience*; and such indeed they are from their childhood, going *astray as soon as they are born*. The *wrath of God* comes upon such, because of their sins; sometimes in this world, but more especially in the next. And dare we make light of that which will lay us under the wrath of God: O no. *Be not ye therefore partakers with them*, ver. 7. Do not partake with them in their sins, that you may not share in their punishment. *We partake with other men in their sins*, not only when we live in the same sinful manner that they do, and consent and comply with their temptations and solicitations to sin; but when we encourage them in their sins, prompt them to them, and do not prevent them and hinder them, as far as it may be in our power to do so.

(3.) Consider what obligations Christians are under to live at another guerdon rate than such sinners do. *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye*, &c. ver. 9. The meaning is, such courses are very unsuitable to your present condition. For whereas in your Gentile and your unregenerate state ye were *darkness*; you have now undergone a great change. The apostle calls their former condition *darkness* in the abstract, to express the great darkness they were in. They lived wicked and profane lives, being destitute of the light of instruction without, and of the illumination and grace of the blessed Spirit within. Note, *a state of sin is a state of darkness*. Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not whither, and doing they know not what. But the grace of God had produced a mighty change in their souls, *Now are ye light in the Lord*, i. e. are savingly enlightened by the word and Spirit of God. Now, i. e. upon your believing in Christ, and your receiving the gospel. *Walk as children of light*. *Children of light*, according to the Hebrew dialect, signifies those who are in a state of light, endued with knowledge and holiness: Now being such, let your conversation be suitable to your condition and privileges, and accordingly live up to the obligation you are under by that knowledge, and those advantages you enjoy. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*, ver. 10. i. e. examining and searching diligently what God has revealed to be his will: and making it appear that you approve it by conforming yourselves unto it. Observe, *We must not only dread and avoid that which is displeasing to God, but enquire and consider what will be acceptable to him*; searching the scriptures with this view: Thus keeping at the greatest distance from these sins.

2. The apostle prescribes some remedies against them. As, (1.) If we would not be entangled by the lusts of the flesh, we must bring forth the *fruits of the Spirit*, ver. 9. This is expected from the children of light that being illuminated, they be also sanctified by the Spirit, and thereupon

bring forth his fruit: which is in all goodness, i. e. an inclination to do good and to shew mercy: and *righteousness*: which signifies justice in our dealings. Thus they are taken more strictly: but more generally, all religion is *goodness and righteousness*. And in and with these must be *truth*, i. e. sincerity and uprightness of hearts. (2.) We must have no fellowship with sin, nor sinners, ver. 11. *Sinful works are works of darkness*. They come from the darkness of ignorance: they seek the darkness of concealment; and they lead to the darkness of hell. These works of darkness are *unfruitful works*; there is nothing got by them at long run; whatever profit is pretended by sin, it will by no means balance the loss: for they issue in the utter ruin and destruction of the impenitent sinner. We must therefore *have no fellowship with these unfruitful works*; i. e. as we must not practice them ourselves, so we must not countenance others in the practice of them. There are many ways of our being accessory to the sins of others; e. g. by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And if we share with others in their sin, we must expect to share with them in their plagues. Nay, if we thus have fellowship with them, we shall be in the utmost danger of acting as they do ere long. But rather than have fellowship with them, we must *reprove them*; implying, that if we do not reprove the sins of others we have fellowship with them. We must prudently and in our places witness against the sins of others, and endeavour to convince them of their sinfulness, when we can do it seasonably and pertinently, in our words; but especially by the holiness of our lives, and a religious conversation. Reprove their sins by abounding in the contrary duties. One reason given is, *For it is a shame even to speak of those things*, &c. ver. 12. They are so filthy and abominable, that it is a shame to mention them, except in a way of reproof; much more must it be a shame to have any fellowship with them. *The things which are done of them in secret*. The apostle seems to speak here of the Gentile idolaters and of their horrid mysteries, which abounded with detestable wickedness, and which none were permitted to divulge upon pain of death. Observe, *A good man is ashamed to speak that which many wicked people are not ashamed to act*: But as far as their wickedness appears, it should be reprov'd by good men. There follows another reason for such reproof: *But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light*, ver. 13. The meaning of which passage may be this; all those unfruitful works of darkness which you are called upon to reprove, are laid open, and made to appear in their proper colours to the sinners themselves, by the light of doctrine or of God's word in your mouths, as faithful reprovers: or by that instructive light which is diffused by the holiness of your lives, and by your exemplary walk. Observe, *That the light of God's word, and the exemplification of it in a Christian conversation, are proper means to convince sinners of their sin and wickedness*. It follows, *for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light*, i. e. it is the light that discovers what was concealed before in darkness; and accordingly it becomes those who are *children of light*, who are *light in the Lord*, to discover to others their sins, and to endeavour to convince them of the evil and danger of them, thus shining as lights in the world. The apostle further urges this duty from the example of God or Christ. *Wherefore he saith*, &c. ver. 14. q. d. in doing this you will copy after the great God, who hath set himself to awaken sinners from their sleep, and to raise them from the death of sin, that they might receive light from Christ. He saith, *The Lord is constantly saying in his word what is more particularly expressed, Isa. x. 1. Or, Christ, by his ministers, who preach the everlasting gospel, is continually calling upon sinners to this purpose. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*. The same thing in the main is designed by these different expressions; and they serve to remind us of the great stupidity and the wretched security of sinners: how insensible they are of their danger, and how unapt they naturally are to spiritual motions, sensations, and actions. And when God calls upon them to *awake*, and to *arise*, his meaning is, that they would break off their sins by repentance, and enter on a course of holy obedience; and he encourages them to essay and to do their utmost that way by that gracious promise, *and Christ shall give thee light*; or, Christ shall enlighten thee: or, shall shine upon thee. He shall bring thee into a state of knowledge, holiness, and comfort; assisting thee with his grace, and refreshing thy mind with joy and peace here, and rewarding thee with eternal glory at length. Observe, *When we are endeavouring to convince sinners, and to reform them from their sins, we are imitating God and Christ, in that which is their great design throughout the gospel*. Some indeed understand this as a call to sinners and to saints. To sinners to repent and turn. To saints to stir up themselves to their duty. The former must arise from their spiritual death; and the other must awake from their spiritual deadness. (3.) Another remedy against sin is *circumspection, care, and caution*, ver. 13. *See then*, &c. This may be understood, either with respect to what immediately precedes: If you are to reprove others for their sins, and would be faithful to your duty in this particular, you must look well to yourselves, and to your own behaviour and conduct. And indeed, *They only are fit to reprove others, who walk with due circumspection and care themselves*. Or else, we have here another remedy, or rather preservative from the before-mentioned sins, and this I take to be the design of the apostle: it being impossible to maintain purity and holiness of heart and life, without great circumspection and care. *Walk circumspectly*; or, as the word signifies, accurately, exactly, in the right way. In order to which we must be frequently consulting our rule, and the directions we have in the sacred oracles. *Not as fools, who walk at all adventures, and who have no understanding of their duty, nor of the worth of their souls*; and through neglect, supineness, and want of care, fall into sin and destroy themselves. *But as wise*; as persons taught of God, and endued with wisdom from above. *Circumspect walking is the effect of true wisdom*; but the contrary of folly. It follows, *redeeming the time*, &c. ver. 16. Literally, buying the opportunity. It is a metaphor taken from merchants and traders, who diligently observe and improve the seasons for merchandise and trade. *It is a great part of Christian wisdom to redeem the time*. Good Christians must be good husbands of their time; and take care to improve it to the best purposes, by watching against temptations; by doing good while it is in the power of their hands; by filling it up with proper employment; one special preservative from sin. They should make the best use they can of the present seasons of grace. Our time is a talent given us by God for some good end, and it is mispent and lost when it is not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we must endeavour to redeem it by doubling our diligence in doing our duty for the future. The reason given is, *because the days are evil*: Either by reason of the wickedness of those who dwell in them; or rather as they are troublesome and dangerous times to you who live in them. Those were times of persecution wherein the apostle wrote this: the Christians were in jeopardy every hour. When the days are evil we have one super-added argument to redeem time; especially, because we know not how soon they may be worse. People are very apt to complain of bad times; it were well if that would stir them up to redeem time. *Wherefore*, says the apostle, ver. 17. i. e. because of the badness of the times, *be ye not unwise*, i. e. ignorant of your duty and negligent about your souls; *But understanding what the will of the Lord is*. Study, consider, and further acquaint yourselves with the will of God as determining your duty. Observe, *Ignorance of your duty*,

duty, and neglect of our souls, are evidences of the greatest folly; while an acquaintance with the will of God and a care to comply with it, bespeak the best and truest wisdom.

In the three following verses the apostle warns against some other particular sins, and urges some other duties.

1. He warns against the sin of drunkenness. *And be not drunk with wine,* ver. 18. This was a sin very frequent among the heathens; and particularly on occasion of the festivals of their gods; and more especially in their *Bacchanalia*; then they were wont to inflame themselves with wine; and all manner of inordinate lusts were consequent upon it; and therefore the apostle adds *wherewith*, or in which drunkenness, is excess. The word *ακρασία* may signify luxury or dissoluteness; and it is certain that drunkenness is no friend to chastity and purity of life: but it virtually contains all manner of extravagance, and transports men into gross sensuality and vile enormities. Note, Drunkenness is a sin that seldom goes alone; but often involves men in other instances of guilt. It is a sin very provoking to God, and a great hindrance to the spiritual life. The apostle may design all such intemperance and disorder, as are opposite to that sober and prudent demeanour he intends in his advice, to redeem the time.

2. Instead of being filled with wine, he exhorts them *to be filled with the Spirit*. Those who are full of drink, are not like to be full of the Spirit; and therefore this duty is opposed to the former sin. The meaning of the exhortation is, that men should labour for a plentiful measure of the graces of the Spirit; that would fill their souls with holy joy, strength, and courage; which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any excess in our endeavours after these; Nay, we ought not to be satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but to be aspiring after greater measures, so as to be filled with the Spirit. Now by this means we shall come to understand what the will of the Lord is; for the Spirit of God is given as a spirit of wisdom and of understanding. And because those who are filled with the Spirit will be carried out in acts of devotion, and all the proper expressions of it, therefore the apostle exhorts,

3. To sing unto the Lord, ver. 19. Drunkards are wont to sing obscene and profane songs. The heathens in their *Bacchanals* used to sing hymns to *Bacchus*, whom they called the god of wine. Thus they express their joy; But the Christian's joy should express itself in songs of praise to his God. In these they should speak to themselves in their assemblies and meeting together, for mutual edification. By *psalms* may be meant David's psalms, or such compositions as were fitly sung with musical instruments. By *hymns* may be meant such others as were confined to matter of praise, as those of *Zacharias*, *Simeon*, &c. *Spiritual songs* may contain a great variety of matter, doctrinal, prophetic, historical, &c. Observe here, (1.) That singing of psalms and hymns is a gospel ordinance: it is an ordinance of God, and appointed for his glory. (2.) That though Christianity is an enemy to profane mirth, yet it encourageth joy and gladness, and the proper expressions of these in the professors of it. God's people have reason to rejoice and to sing for joy. They are to sing and to make melody in their hearts; not only with their voices, but with inward affection: and then their doing this will be as delightful and acceptable to God as music useth to be to us, and it must be with a design to please him, and to promote his glory that we do this, and then it will be done to the Lord.

4. Thanksgiving is another duty that the apostle exhorts to ver. 20. We are appointed to sing psalms, &c. for the expression of our thankfulness to God; but though we are not always singing, we should be always giving thanks, i. e. we should never want a disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it. We must continue it throughout the whole course of our lives; and we should give thanks for all things; not only for spiritual blessings enjoyed, and eternal ones expected; for what of the former we have in hand; and for what of the other we have in hope; but for temporal mercies too; not only for our comforts, but also for our sanctified afflictions; not only for what immediately concerns ourselves, but for the instances of God's kindness and favours to others also. It is our duty in every thing to give thanks unto God and the Father: to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him: in whose name we are to offer up all our prayers and praises, and spiritual services, that they may be acceptable to God.

21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. 24. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. 27. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. 30. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to the discharge of relative duties: and as a general foundation for these duties he lays down that rule, ver. 21. There is a mutual submission that Christians owe one to another; condescending to bear one another's burdens. Not advancing themselves above others, or domineering over one another, and giving laws to one another. St. Paul was an example of this truly Christian temper, who became all things to all men. We must be of a yielding and of a submissive spirit, and ready to all the duties of the respective places and stations that God hath allotted to us in the world. In the fear of God, i. e. so far as is consistent with the fear of God; and for his sake, and out of conscience towards him; and that hereby we give proof that we truly fear him. Where there is this

mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed. From ver. 22. to the end, he speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; and he speaks of these in a Christian manner, setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection; and Christ as an example of love in husbands.

1. The duty prescribed to wives is submission to their husbands in the Lord, ver. 22. which submission includes the honouring and the obeying them; and that from a principle of love to them: And they must do this in compliance with God's authority, who has commanded it, which is doing it *as unto the Lord*. Or it may be understood by way of similitude and likeness, that the sense may be, as being devoted to God you submit yourselves unto him. From the former sense we may learn, that by a conscientious discharge of the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, we obey and please God himself: And from the latter, that God not only requires and insists on those duties which immediately respect himself, but such as respect *our neighbours too*. The apostle assigns the reason of this submission from wives, *For the husband is the head of wife*, ver. 23. The metaphor is taken from the head in the natural body, which being the seat of reason, of wisdom, and of knowledge, and the fountain of sense and motion, is more excellent than the rest of the body. God has given the man the pre-eminence, and a right to direct and govern by creation, and in that original law of the relation, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*. And whatever there is of uneasiness in that, it is an effect of sin coming into the world: and generally the man has (what he ought to have) a superiority in wisdom and knowledge. He is therefore the head; even as Christ is the head of the church. There is a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, in that superiority and headship which God hath appointed to the husband. The apostle adds, *and he is the Saviour of the body*. Christ's authority is exercised over the church for the saving her from evil, and the supplying her with every thing good for her: In like manner should the husband be employed for the protection and comfort of his spouse; and therefore she should the more cheerfully subject herself unto him: So it follows, *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ*, (ver. 24.) with cheerfulness, with fidelity, with humility, &c. *so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing*, i. e. in every thing to which their authority justly extends itself; in every thing lawful and consistent with duty to God.

2. The duty of husbands (on the other hand) is to love their wives, ver. 25. For without this they would abuse their superiority and headship; and wherever this prevails as it ought to do, it will infer the other duties of the relation; it being a special and peculiar affection that is required in her behalf. And the love of Christ to the church is proposed as an example of this; which love of his is a sincere, a pure, an ardent, and a constant affection; and that notwithstanding the imperfections and failures that she is guilty of. The greatness of his love to the church appeared in his giving himself unto the death for it. Observe, *As the church's objection to Christ is proposed as an example to wives; so the love of Christ to his church is proposed as a pattern to husbands*; and while such exemplars are offered to both, and so much required of each, neither has reason to complain of the divine injunctions. The love which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife, will make an amends for that subjection that he demands from her to her husband; and the prescribed subjection of the wife will be an abundant return for that love of the husband which God hath made her due.

The apostle having mentioned Christ's love to the church, enlarges upon it: assigning the reason why he gave himself for it, viz. That he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next, ver. 25, 27. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ver. 26. i. e. that he might endue all his members with a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin. The instrumental means whereby this is effected, are the instituted sacraments, particularly the washing of baptism, and the preaching and reception of the gospel. And that he might present it to himself, &c. ver. 27. Dr. Lightfoot thinks the apostle alludes here to the Jews' extraordinary great curiousness in their washings for purification. They were careful that there should be no wrinkle to keep the flesh from the water; and no spot or dirt which was not thoroughly washed. Others understand him as alluding to a garment come new out of the fuller's hand, purged from spots, stretched from wrinkles; the former newly contracted, the latter by long time and custom. That he might present it to himself; i. e. that he might perfectly unite to himself in that great day, a glorious church, i. e. perfect in knowledge and in holiness, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; nothing of deformity or disfigurement remaining, but being entirely amiable and pleasing in his eye; holy and without blemish, free from the least remains of sin. The church in general, and particularly believers, will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. And from this and the former verse together we may take notice, that the glorifying of the church is intended in the sanctifying of it: And that those, and those only who are sanctified now, shall be glorified hereafter. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, &c. ver. 28. The wife being made one with her husband, (not in a natural, but in a civil and in a relative sense) this is an argument why he should love her with as cordial and as ardent an affection as that with which he loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, ver. 29. i. e. no man in his right senses ever hated himself, however deformed, or whatever his imperfections might be; so far from it, that he nourisheth and cherisheth it: he uses himself with a great deal of care and tenderness; and is industrious to supply himself with every thing convenient or good for him, with food and clothing, &c. even as the Lord the church. As the Lord nourisheth and cherisheth the church, which he furnishes with all things that he sees needful or good for her; with whatever conduces to her everlasting happiness and welfare. The apostle adds, *For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones*, ver. 30. He assigns this as a reason why Christ does nourish and cherish his church, because all that belong to it are members of his body, &c. i. e. of his mystical body. Or, we are members out of his body: All that grace and glory which the church has, is from Christ: as Eve was taken out of the man. But (as one observes) it being the manner of the sacred writings to express a complex body, by the enumeration of the several parts of it; as the heaven and earth for the world: evening and morning for the natural day, &c. so here by body, flesh, and bones, we are to understand himself; the meaning of the verbe being, that we are members of Christ. For this cause, &c. ver. 31. because they are one, as Christ and his church are one: shall a man leave his father and mother; the apostle refers to the words of Adam, when Eve was given to him for a meet help, Gen. ii. 24. We are not to understand by them, as though a man's obligation to other relations were cancelled upon his marriage; but only that this relation is to be preferred to all others; there being a nearer union betwixt these two, than betwixt any others; that the man must rather leave any of those than his wife. And they two shall be one flesh, that is by virtue of the matrimonial bond. This is a great mystery, ver. 32. Those words of Adam just mentioned by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage; but they have also a hidden mystical sense in them, relating

behaviour. *Not to be talking*, i. e. obscene and lewd discourse; or more generally such vain discourse, as betrays much folly and indiscretion, and is far from edifying the hearers. *Not jesting*. The Greek word *εὐφροσύνη*, is the same which Aristotle in his *Ethics*, makes a virtue; pleasantness of conversation. And there is, no doubt, an innocent and inoffensive jesting, which we cannot suppose the apostle does here forbid. Some understand him of such scurrilous and abusive reflections, as tend to expose others, and to make them ridiculous. This is bad enough. But the context seems to restrain it to such pleasurable discourse as is filthy and obscene; which he may also design by that *corrupt*, or putrid and rotten communication that he speaks of, *chap. iv. 29*. Of these things he says they are *not convenient*. Indeed there is more than inconvenience, even a great deal of mischief in them. They are so far from being profitable, that they pollute and poison the hearers. But the meaning is, those things do not become Christians, and are very unsuitable to their profession and character. Christians are allowed to be cheerful and pleasant: but they must be merry and wise. The apostle adds, *but rather giving of thanks*: So far let the Christian's way of mirth be from that of obscene and prophane wit, that he delight his mind, and make himself cheerful by a grateful remembrance of God's goodness and mercy to him, and by blessing and praising him on the account of these. Note, (1.) *We should take all occasions to render thanksgivings and praises to God for his kindness and favours to us.* (2.) *A reflection on the grace and goodness of God to us, with a design to excite our thankfulness to him, is proper to refresh and delight the Christian's mind, and to make him cheerful.* Dr. Hammond thinks that *εὐχριστία*, may signify gracious, pious, religious discourse in the general; by way of opposition to what the apostle condemns. Our cheerfulness, instead of breaking out into what is vain and sinful, and a profanation of God's name, should express itself as becomes Christians, and in what may tend to his glory. If men did abound more in good and pious expressions, they could not be so apt to utter ill and unbecoming words; For shall *blessing and cursing*, lewdness and thanksgivings, proceed out of the same mouth? To fortify us against the sins of uncleanness, &c. the apostle urges several arguments, and prescribes several remedies, in what follows.

1. He urges several arguments. As,

(1.) Consider that these are sins which shut persons out of heaven. *For this ye know*, &c. *ver. 5*. They knew it, being informed of it by the Christian religion. By a *covetous man* some understand a lewd, lascivious libertine, who indulges himself in those vile lusts which were accounted certain marks of an heathen and an idolater. Others understand it in the common acceptation of the word; and such a man is an idolater, because there is spiritual idolatry in the love of this world. As the epicure makes a god of his belly; so the covetous makes a god of his money; sets those affections upon it, and places that hope, confidence, and delight in worldly good, which should be referred for God only. He serves mammon instead of God. Of these persons it is said, that they *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*. That may be, the kingdom of Christ who is God; or the kingdom which is God's by nature, and Christ's as he is mediator: the kingdom which Christ hath purchased, and which God bestows. Heaven is here described as a kingdom, (as frequently elsewhere) with respect to its eminency and glory, its felicity and immortality, &c. In this kingdom, the saints and servants of God have an inheritance: For it is the inheritance of the saints in light. But those who are impenitent, and allow themselves either in the lusts of the flesh or the love of the world, are not Christians indeed, and so belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they ever come to the kingdom of glory. Let us then be excited to be on our guard against those sins which would exclude and shut us out of heaven.

(2.) These sins bring the wrath of God upon those who are guilty of them. *Let no man deceive you with vain words*, &c. *ver. 6*. Let none flatter you, as though such things were tolerable, and to be allowed of in Christians; or as though they were not very provoking and offensive unto God; or as though you might indulge yourselves in them, and yet escape with impunity. These are *vain words*. Observe, *they who flatter themselves and others with hopes of impunity in sin, do but put a cheat upon themselves and others*. Thus Satan deceived our first parents with *vain words*, when he said to them, *Ye shall not surely die*. They are *vain words* indeed: for those who trust to them will find themselves wretchedly imposed upon, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. By children of disobedience may be meant the Gentiles, who disbelieved, and refused to comply with and to submit themselves to the gospel: Or, more generally, all obstinate sinners, who will not be reclaimed, but are given over to disobedience. Disobedience is the very malignity of sin. And it is by an usual Hebrewism that such sinners are called children of disobedience; and such indeed they are from their childhood, going astray as soon as they are born. The wrath of God comes upon such, because of their sins; sometimes in this world, but more especially in the next. And dare we make light of that which will lay us under the wrath of God: O no. *Be not therefore partakers with them*, *ver. 7*. Do not partake with them in their sins, that you may not share in their punishment. We partake with other men in their sins, not only when we live in the same sinful manner that they do, and consent and comply with their temptations and solicitations to sin; but when we encourage them in their sins, prompt them to them; and do not prevent them and hinder them, as far as it may be in our power to do so.

(3.) Consider what obligations Christians are under to live at another guest's rate than such sinners do. *For we were sometimes darkness, but now are light*, &c. *ver. 8*. The meaning is, such courses are very unsuitable to your present condition. For whereas in your Gentile and your unregenerate state ye were darkness; you have now undergone a great change. The apostle calls their former condition darkness in the abstract, to express the great darkness they were in. They lived wicked and profane lives, being destitute of the light of instruction without, and of the illumination and grace of the blessed Spirit within. Note, *a state of sin is a state of darkness*. Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not whither, and doing they know not what. But the grace of God had produced a mighty change in their souls, *Now are ye light in the Lord*, i. e. are savingly enlightened by the word and Spirit of God. Now, i. e. upon your believing in Christ, and your receiving the gospel. *Walk as children of light*. Children of light, according to the Hebrew dialect, signifies those who are in a state of light, endued with knowledge and holiness: Now being such, let your conversation be suitable to your condition and privileges, and accordingly live up to the obligation you are under by that knowledge, and those advantages you enjoy. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*, *ver. 10*. i. e. examining and searching diligently what God has revealed to be his will: and making it appear that you approve it by conforming yourselves unto it. Observe, *We must not only dread and avoid that which is displeasing to God, but enquire and consider what will be acceptable to him; searching the scriptures with this view: Thus keeping at the greatest distance from these sins*.

2. The apostle prescribes some remedies against them. As, (1.) If we would not be entangled by the lusts of the flesh, we must bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, *ver. 9*. This is expected from the children of light that being illuminated, they be also sanctified by the Spirit, and thereupon

bring forth his fruit: which is *inward goodness*, i. e. an inclination to do good and to shew mercy: and *righteousness*, which signifies justice in our dealings. Thus they are taken more strictly: but more generally, all religion is *goodness and righteousness*. And in and with these must be *truth*, i. e. sincerity and uprightness of hearts. (2.) We must have no fellowship with sin, nor sinners. *ver. 11*. *Sinful works are works of darkness*. They come from the darkness of ignorance: they seek the darkness of concealment; and they lead to the darkness of hell. These works of darkness are *unfruitful works*; there is nothing got by them at long run; whatever profit is pretended by sin, it will by no means balance the loss: for they issue in the utter ruin and destruction of the impenitent sinner. We must therefore have no fellowship with these unfruitful works; i. e. as we must not practice them ourselves, so we must not countenance others in the practice of them. There are many ways of our being accessory to the sins of others; e. g. by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And if we share with others in their sin, we must expect to share with them in their plagues. Nay, if we thus have fellowship with them, we shall be in the utmost danger of acting as they do ere long. But rather than have fellowship with them, we must reprove them; implying, that if we do not reprove the sins of others we have fellowship with them. We must prudently and in our places witness against the sins of others, and endeavour to convince them of their sinfulness, when we can do it seasonably and pertinently, in our words; but especially by the holiness of our lives, and a religious conversation. Reprove their sins by abounding in the contrary duties. One reason given is, *For it is a shame even to speak of those things*, &c. *ver. 12*. They are so filthy and abominable, that it is a shame to mention them, except in a way of reproof; much more must it be a shame to have any fellowship with them. *The things which are done of them in secret*. The apostle seems to speak here of the Gentile idolaters and of their horrid mysteries, which abounded with detestable wickedness, and which none were permitted to divulge upon pain of death. Observe, *A good man is ashamed to speak that which many wicked people are not ashamed to act*: But as far as their wickedness appears, it should be reprobated by good men. There follows another reason for such reproof: *But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light*, *ver. 13*. The meaning of which passage may be this; all those unfruitful works of darkness which you are called upon to reprove, are laid open, and made to appear in their proper colours to the sinners themselves, by the light of doctrine or of God's word in your mouths, as faithful reprovers: or by that instructive light which is diffused by the holiness of your lives, and by your exemplary walk. Observe, *That the light of God's word, and the exemplification of it in a Christian conversation, are proper means to convince sinners of their sin and wickedness*. It follows, *for whatsoever doth make manifest, is light*, i. e. it is the light that discovers what was concealed before in darkness; and accordingly it becomes those who are children of light, who are light in the Lord, to discover to others their sins, and to endeavour to convince them of the evil and danger of them, thus shining as lights in the world. The apostle further urges this duty from the example of God or Christ. *Wherefore he saith*, &c. *ver. 14*. q. d. in doing thus you will copy after the great God, who hath set himself to awaken sinners from their sleep, and to raise them from the death of sin, that they might receive light from Christ. *He saith*, The Lord is constantly saying in his word what is more particularly expressed, *Isa. x. 1*. Or, Christ, by his ministers, who preach the everlasting gospel, is continually calling upon sinners to this purpose. *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*. The same thing in the main is designed by these different expressions; and they serve to remind us of the great stupidity and the wretched security of sinners: how insensible they are of their danger, and how unapt they naturally are to spiritual motions, sensations, and actions. And when God calls upon them to awake, and to arise, his meaning is, that they would break off their sins by repentance, and enter on a course of holy obedience; and he encourages them to essay and to do so in utmost that way by that gracious promise, *and Christ shall give thee light*; or, Christ shall enlighten thee: or, shall shine upon thee. He shall bring thee into a state of knowledge, holiness, and comfort; assisting thee with his grace, and refreshing thy mind with joy and peace here, and rewarding thee with eternal glory at length. Observe, *When we are endeavouring to convince sinners, and to reform them from their sins, we are imitating God and Christ: which is their great design throughout the gospel*. Some indeed understand this as a call to sinners and to saints. To sinners to repent and turn. To saints to stir up themselves to their duty. The former must arise from their spiritual death; and the other must awake from their spiritual deadness. (3.) Another remedy against sin is circumspection, care, and caution, *ver. 13*. *See then*, &c. This may be understood, either with respect to what immediately precedes: If you are to reprove others for their sins, and would be faithful to your duty in this particular, you must look well to yourselves, and to your own behaviour and conduct. And indeed, *They only are fit to reprove others, who walk with due circumspection and care themselves*. Or else, we have here another remedy, or rather preservative from the before-mentioned sins, and this I take to be the design of the apostle: it being impossible to maintain purity and holiness of heart and life, without great circumspection and care. *Walk circumspectly*; or, as the word signifies, accurately, exactly, in the right way. In order to which we must be frequently consulting our rule, and the directions we have in the sacred oracles. *Not as fools*, who walk at all adventures, and who have no understanding of their duty, nor of the worth of their souls; and through neglect, stupidity, and want of care, fall into sin and destroy themselves. *But as wise*: as persons taught of God, and endued with wisdom from above. *Circumspect walking is the effect of true wisdom; but the contrary of folly*. It follows, *redeeming the time*, &c. *ver. 16*. Literally, buying the opportunity. It is a metaphor taken from merchants and traders, who diligently observe and improve the seasons for merchandise and trade. *It is a great part of Christian wisdom to redeem the time*. Good Christians must be good husbands of their time; and take care to improve it to the best purposes, by watching against temptations; by doing good while it is in the power of their hands; by filling it up with proper employment; one special preservative from sin. They should make the best use they can of the present seasons of grace. Our time is a talent given us by God for some good end, and it is mispent and lost when it is not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we must endeavour to redeem it by doubling our diligence in doing our duty for the future. The reason given is, *because the days are evil*: Either by reason of the wickedness of those who dwell in them; or rather as they are troublesome and dangerous times to you who live in them. Those were times of persecution wherein the apostle wrote this: the Christians were in jeopardy every hour. When the days are evil we have one super-added argument to redeem time; especially, because we know not how soon they may be worse. People are very apt to complain of bad times; it were well if that would stir them up to redeem time. *Wherefore*, says the apostle, *ver. 17*. i. e. because of the badness of the times, *be ye not wise, i. e. ignorant of your duty and negligent about your souls; but understanding what the will of the Lord is*. Study, consider, and further acquaint yourselves with the will of God as determining your duty. Observe, *Ignorance of your duty*,

duty, and neglect of our souls, are evidences of the greatest folly; while an acquaintance with the will of God and a care to comply with it, bespeak the best and truest wisdom.

In the three following verses the apostle warns against some other particular sins, and urges some other duties.

1. He warns against the sin of drunkenness. *And be not drunk with wine,* ver. 18. This was a sin very frequent among the heathens; and particularly on occasion of the festivals of their gods; and more especially in their *Bacchanalia*; then they were wont to inebriate themselves with wine; and all manner of inordinate lusts were consequent upon it; and therefore the apostle adds *wherein, or in which drunkenness, is excess.* The word *ακρα* may signify luxury or dissoluteness; and it is certain that drunkenness is no friend to chastity and purity of life: but it virtually contains all manner of extravagance, and transports men into gross sensuality and vile enormities. Note, Drunkenness is a sin that seldom goes alone; but often involves men in other instances of guilt. It is a sin very provoking to God, and a great hindrance to the spiritual life. The apostle may design all such intemperance and disorder, as are opposite to that sober and prudent demeanour he intends in his advice, to redeem the time.

2. Instead of being filled with wine, he exhorts them *to be filled with the Spirit.* Those who are full of drink, are not like to be full of the Spirit; and therefore this duty is opposed to the former sin. The meaning of the exhortation is, that men should labour for a plentiful measure of the graces of the Spirit; that would fill their souls with holy joy, strength, and courage; which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any excess in our endeavours after these; Nay, we ought not to be satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but to be aspiring after greater measures, so as to be filled with the Spirit. Now by this means we shall come to understand what the will of the Lord is; for the Spirit of God is given as a spirit of wisdom and of understanding. And because those who are filled with the Spirit will be carried out in acts of devotion, and all the proper expressions of it, therefore the apostle exhorts,

3. To sing unto the Lord, ver. 19. Drunkards are wont to sing obscure and profane songs. The heathens in their *Bacchanals* used to sing hymns to *Bacchus*, whom they called the god of wine. Thus they express their joy; But the Christian's joy should express itself in songs of praise to his God. In these they should speak to themselves in their assemblies and meeting together, for mutual edification. By *psalms* may be meant David's psalms, or such compositions as were fitly sung with musical instruments. By *hymns* may be meant such others as were confined to matter of praise, as those of *Zacharias*, *Simon*, &c. *Spiritual songs* may contain a great variety of matter, doctrinal, prophetic, historical, &c. Observe here, (1.) That singing of psalms and hymns is a gospel ordinance: it is an ordinance of God, and appointed for his glory. (2.) That though Christianity is an enemy to profane mirth, yet it encourageth joy and gladness, and the proper expressions of these in the professors of it. God's people have reason to rejoice and to sing for joy. They are to sing and to make melody in their hearts; not only with their voices, but with inward affection: and then their doing this will be as delightful and acceptable to God as music itself to be to us, and it must be with a design to please him, and to promote his glory that we do this, and then it will be done to the Lord.

4. Thanksgiving is another duty that the apostle exhorts to ver. 20. We are appointed to sing psalms, &c. for the expression of our thankfulness to God; but though we are not always singing, we should be always giving thanks, i. e. we should never want a disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it. We must continue it throughout the whole course of our lives; and we should give thanks for all things; not only for spiritual blessings enjoyed, and eternal ones expected; for what of the former we have in hand; and for what of the other we have in hope; but for temporal mercies too; not only for our comforts, but also for our sanctified afflictions; not only for what immediately concerns ourselves, but for the instances of God's kindness and favours to others also. It is our duty in every thing to give thanks unto God and the Father: to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him; in whose name we are to offer up all our prayers and praises, and spiritual services, that they may be acceptable to God.

21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. 24. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. 27. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. 30. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to the discharge of relative duties: and as a general foundation for these duties he lays down that rule, ver. 21. There is a mutual submission that Christians owe one to another; condescending to bear one another's burdens. Not advancing themselves above others, or domineering over one another, and giving laws to one another. St. Paul was an example of this truly Christian temper, who became all things to all men. We must be of a yielding and of a submissive spirit, and ready to all the duties of the respective places and stations that God hath allotted to us in the world. In the fear of God, i. e. so far as is consistent with the fear of God; and for his sake, and out of conscience towards him; and that hereby we give proof that we truly fear him. Where there is this

mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed. From ver. 22. to the end, he speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; and he speaks of these in a Christian manner, setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection; and Christ as an example of love in husbands.

1. The duty prescribed to *wives* is submission to their husbands in the Lord, ver. 22. which submission implies the honoring and the obeying them; and that from a principle of love to them. And they must do this in obedience with God's authority, who has commanded it, which is doing it *unto the Lord.* Or it may be understood by way of similitude and likeness that the sense may be, as being devoted to God you submit yourselves unto him. From the former sense we may learn, that by a conscientious discharge of the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, we obey and please God himself: And from the latter, that God not only requires and insists on those duties which immediately respect himself, but such as respect our neighbours too. The apostle assigns the reason of this submission from wives, *For the husband is the head of wife,* ver. 23. The metaphor is taken from the head in the natural body, which being the seat of reason, of wisdom, and of knowledge, and the fountain of sense and motion, is more excellent than the rest of the body. God has given the man the pre-eminence, and a right to direct and govern by creation, and in that original law of the relation, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.* And whatever there is of uneasiness in that, it is an effect of sin coming into the world: and generally the man has (what he ought to have) a superiority in wisdom and knowledge. He is therefore the head; even as Christ is the head of the church. There is a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, in that superiority and headship which God hath appointed to the husband. The apostle adds, *and he is the Saviour of the body.* Christ's authority is exercised over the church for the saving her from evil, and the supplying her with every thing good for her: In like manner should the husband be employed for the protection and comfort of his spouse; and therefore she should the more cheerfully subject herself unto him: So it follows, *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ,* (ver. 24.) with cheerfulness, with fidelity, with humility, &c. so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing, i. e. in every thing to which their authority justly extends itself; in every thing lawful and consistent with duty to God.

2. The duty of husbands (on the other hand) is to love their wives, ver. 25. For without this they would abuse their superiority and headship; and where ever this prevails as it ought to do, it will infer the other duty of the relation; it being a special and peculiar affection that is required in her behalf. And the love of Christ to the church is proposed as an example of this; which love of his is a sincere, a pure, an ardent, and a constant affection; and that notwithstanding the imperfections and failures that he is guilty of. The greatness of his love to the church appeared in his giving himself unto the death for it. Observe, As the church's objection to Christ is proposed as an example to wives; so the love of Christ to his church is proposed as an example to husbands; and while such exemplars are offered to both, and so much required of each, neither has reason to complain of the divine injunctions. The love which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife, will make an amends for that subjection that he demands from her to her husband; and the prescribed subjection of the wife will be an abundant return for that love of the husband which God hath made her due.

The apostle having mentioned Christ's love to the church, enlarges upon it: assigning the reason why he gave himself for it, viz. That he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next, ver. 26, 27. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ver. 26. i. e. that he might endue all his members with a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin. The instrumental means whereby this is effected, are the instituted sacraments, particularly the washing of baptism, and the preaching and reception of the gospel. And that he might present it to himself, &c. ver. 27. Dr. Lightfoot thinks the apostle alludes here to the Jews' extraordinary great cleanliness in their washings for purification. They were careful that there should be no wrinkle to keep the flesh from the water; and no spot or dirt which was not thoroughly washed. Others understand him as alluding to a garment come new out of the fuller's hand, purged from spots, stretched from wrinkles; the former newly contracted, the latter by long time and custom. That he might present it to himself, i. e. that he might perfectly unite to himself in that great day, a glorious church, i. e. perfect in knowledge and in holiness, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; nothing of deformity or deilement remaining, but being entirely amiable and pleasing in his eye; holy and without blemish, free from the least remains of sin. The church in general, and particularly believers, will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. And from this and the former verse together we may take notice, that the glorifying of the church is intended in the sanctifying of it: And that those, and those only who are sanctified now, shall be glorified hereafter. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, &c. ver. 28. The wife being made one with her husband, (not in a natural, but in a civil and in a relative sense) this is an argument why he should love her with as cordial and as ardent an affection as that with which he loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, ver. 29. i. e. no man in his right senses ever hated himself, however deformed, or whatever his imperfections might be; so far from it, that he nourisheth and cherisheth it: he uses himself with a great deal of care and tenderness; and is industrious to supply himself with every thing convenient or good for him, with food and clothing, &c. even as the Lord the church. As the Lord nourisheth and cherisheth the church, which he furnishes with all things that he sees needful or good for her; with whatever conduces to her everlasting happiness and welfare. The apostle adds, *For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones,* ver. 30. He assigns this as a reason why Christ does nourish and cherish his church, because all that belong to it are members of his body, &c. i. e. of his mystical body. Or, we are members out of his body: All that grace and glory which the church has, is from Christ: as Eve was taken out of the man. But (as one observes) it being the manner of the sacred writings to express a complex body, by the enumeration of the several parts of it; as the heaven and earth for the world: evening and morning for the natural day, &c. so here by body, flesh, and bones, we are to understand himself; the meaning of the verbe being, that we are members of Christ. For this cause, &c. ver. 31. because they are one, as Christ and his church are one: shall a man leave his father and mother; the apostle refers to the words of Adam, when Eve was given to him for a meet help, Gen. ii. 24. We are not to understand by them, as though a man's obligation to other relations were cancelled upon his marriage; but only that this relation is to be preferred to all others; there being a nearer union betwixt these two, than betwixt any others; that the man must rather leave any of those than his wife. And they two shall be one flesh, that is by virtue of the matrimonial bond. This is a great mystery, ver. 32. Those words of Adam just mentioned by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage; but they have also a hidden mystical sense in them, relating

relating to the union betwixt Christ and his church, "of which the conjugal union betwixt Adam and the mother of us all was a type: though not instituted or appointed by God to signify this: yet it was a kind of a natural type, as having a resemblance to it. *I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

After this the apostle concludes this part of his discourse with a brief summary of the duty of husbands and wives, *ver. 33. Nevertheless, q. d. but though there be such a secret, mystical sense, yet the plain literal sense concerns you. Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; i. e. with such a sincere, peculiar, singular, and prevailing affection as that is which he bears to himself. And the wife see that she reverence her husband.* Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produces a care to please; and of fear, which awakens a caution lest just offence be given: And that the wife thus reverence her husband is the will of God, and the law of the relation.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, (1.) The apostle proceeds in the exhortation to relative duties, which he began in the former; Particularly he insists on the duties of children and parents; and of servants and masters, ver. 1—9. (2.) He exhorts and directs Christians how to behave themselves in the spiritual warfare with the enemies of their souls; and to the exercise of several Christian graces, which he proposes to them as so many pieces of spiritual armour, to preserve and defend them in the conflict, ver. 10—18. (3.) We have here the conclusion of the epistle; in which he takes his leave of them, recommending himself to the prayer of the believing Ephesians, and praying for them, ver. 19—24.

1. **CHILDREN**, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. 2. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise), 3. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4. And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. 5. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: 6 Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: 7. With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men: 8. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall be received of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. 9. And ye, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.

Here we have further directions concerning relative duties, in which the apostle is very particular.

1. The duty of children to their parents, *Come, ye children, hearken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* The great duty of children is to obey their parents, *ver. 1.* Parents being the instruments of their being, God and nature having given them an authority to command in subserviency to God: and if children will be obedient to their pious parents, they will be in a fair way to be pious as they are. And that obedience which God demands from their children, in their behalf, includes an inward reverence, as well as the outward expressions and acts. Obey in the Lord. Some take this as a limitation, and understand it thus, and is consistent with your duty to God. We must not disobey our heavenly Father in obedience to earthly parents: for our obligation to God is prior and superior to all others. I take it rather as a reason. Children, obey your parents: for the Lord hath commanded it: Obey them therefore for the Lord's sake, and with an eye to him. Or it may be a particular specification of the general duty. Obey your parents, especially in those things which relate to the Lord. Your parents teach you good manners, and therein you must obey them: they teach you what is for your health, and in that you must obey them; but the chief things in which you are to do it, are the things pertaining to the Lord. Religious parents charge their children to keep the way of the Lord, *Gen. xlviii. 19.* They command them to be sound in the way of their duty towards God, and to take heed of those sins that their age is incident to; and in these things especially they must see that they be obedient. There is a general reason given; *for this is right, i. e. there is a natural equity in it, and God hath enjoined it, and it highly becomes Christians.* It is the order of nature that parents command, and children obey. Though this may seem a hard saying, yet it is duty, and it must be done by such as would please God, and approve themselves to him. For the proof of this the apostle quotes the law of the fifth commandment; which Christ was so far from designing to abrogate and repeal, that he came to confirm it; as appears by his vindicating it, *Matt. xv. 4, &c. Honour thy father and mother, ver. 2.* which honour implies reverence, obedience; and relief and maintenance, if these be needed. The apostle adds, *which is the first commandment with promise.* Some little difficulty ariseth from this, which we should not overlook; because some who plead for the lawfulness of images, bring this as a proof that we are not obliged by the second commandment. But there is no manner of force in the argument. The second commandment hath not a particular promise; but only a general declaration or assertion, which relates to the whole law of God's keeping mercy for thousands. And then by this is not meant the first commandment of the decalogue that has a promise: for there is no other after it that has, and therefore it would be improper to say it is the first: But the meaning may be this, this is a prime or chief commandment, and it has a promise; and is the first commandment in the second table; and it hath a promise: And the promise is, *That it may be well with thee, &c. ver. 3.* Observe that whereas the promise in the commandment hath reference to the land of Canaan, the apostle hereby shews that that and other promises, which we have in the Old Testament relating to the land of Canaan, are to be understood more generally. That you may not think that the Jews only, to whom God gave the land of Canaan, were bound by the fifth commandment, he here gives it further sense. *That it may be well with thee, &c.* Outward prosperity and long life, are blessings promised to those who keep this commandment. This is the way to have it well with us. And obedient children are often rewarded with outward prosperity: not indeed that it is always so. There are instances of such children who meet with much

affliction in this life: But *ordinarily* it is thus rewarded; and where it is not, it is made up with something better. Observe, (1.) *The gospel has its temporal promises, as well as spiritual ones.* (2.) *Although the authority of God be sufficient to engage us in our duty yet we are allowed to have respect to the promised reward: And, (3.) Though it contains some temporal advantage, even that may be considered as a motive and encouragement to our obedience.*

(2.) The duty of parents. *And ye fathers, ver. 4.* Or ye parents, (1.) *Do not provoke your children to wrath.* Though God has given you power, you must not abuse that power: remembering that your children are, in a particular manner, pieces of yourselves: and therefore ought to be governed with great tenderness and love. Be not impatient with them, use no unreasonable severities, and lay no rigid injunctions upon them. When you caution them, when you counsel them, when you reprove them, do it in such a manner, as not to provoke them to wrath. In all such cases deal prudently and wisely with them, endeavouring to convince their judgments, and to work upon their reason. (2.) *Bring them up well: in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* In the discipline of proper and of compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of that duty which God requires of them, and by which they may become better acquainted with him. Give them a good education. It is the great duty of parents to be careful in the education of their children. Not only bring them up as the brutes do, taking care to provide for them; but bring them in nurture and admonition, in such a manner as is suitable to their reasonable natures. Nay, not only bring them up as men, in nurture and admonition: but as Christians, in the admonition of the Lord. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to the whole of their duty towards God.

The duty of servants, and that also is summed up in one word, which is obedience. He is largest on this article; as knowing there was the greatest need of it. These servants were generally slaves. *That civil servitude is not inconsistent with Christian liberty.* They may be the Lord's freemen, who are slaves to men. *Your masters according to the flesh, ver. 5. i. e. who have the command of your bodies, but not of your souls and consciences; God alone has dominion over these.* Now with respect to servants, he exhorts,

(1.) That they obey *with fear and trembling.* They are to reverence those who are over them; fearing to displease them, and trembling lest they should justly incur their anger and indignation.

(2.) That they be sincere in their obedience. *In singleness of heart; not dissembling obedience when they design disobedience, but serving them with faithfulness.*

(3.) They should have an eye to Jesus Christ in all the service that they perform to their masters. *ver. 5, 6, 7. doing service as to the Lord, and not to men: i. e. not to men only or principally.* When servants in the discharge of the duty of their places have an eye to Christ, this puts an honour upon their obedience, and an acceptableness into it. *Service done to their earthly master with an eye to him, become acceptable service to him also.* To have an eye to Christ, is to remember that he sees them, and is ever present with them; and that his authority obliges them to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of their station.

(4.) They must not serve their masters *with eye-service, ver. 6.* Not only when their masters's eye is upon them; but they must be as conscientious to the discharge of their duty, when they are absent and out of the way: because then their master in heaven beholds them; and therefore they must not act as men-pleasers: as though they had no regard to the pleasing of God and approving themselves to him, if they can impose on their master. Observe, *A steady regard to the Lord Jesus Christ will make men faithful and sincere in every station.*

(5.) What they do, they must do cheerfully. *Doing the will of God from the heart; serving their masters, as God wills they should, not grudgingly or by constraint; but from a principle of love to them and their concerns.* This is *doing it with good-will, ver. 7.* which will make their service easy to themselves, pleasing to their masters, and acceptable to the Lord Christ. There should be good-will to their masters: good-will to the families they are in; and especially a readiness to do their duty to God. Observe, *Service performed with conscience, and from a regard to God, though it be to unrighteous masters, will be accounted by Christ as service done to himself.*

(6.) Let faithful servants trust God for their wages, while they do their duty in his fear *knowing that whatsoever good thing, ver. 8. how poor and mean soever it may be, considered in itself, The same shall he receive of the Lord, i. e. the reward of the same, by a metonymy.* Though his master on earth should neglect or abuse him, instead of rewarding him, he shall certainly be rewarded by the Lord Christ, *Whether he be bond or free; whether he be a poor bond-servant, or a freeman, or master.* Christ regards not these differences of men at present; nor will he in the great and final judgment. You think a prince, or a magistrate, or a minister, that does his duty here, will be sure to receive his reward in heaven; But what capacity am I a poor servant in, of recommending myself to the favour of God? Why, God will as certainly reward thee for the meanest drudgery, that is done from a sense of duty, and with an eye to himself. And what can be said more proper, both to engage and to encourage servants to their duty?

4. The duty of masters. *And ye, masters, do the same things unto them, ver. 9. i. e. act after the same manner.* Be just to them as you expect they should be to you: shew the like good-will and concern for them, and be careful herein to approve yourselves to God. Observe, *Masters are under as strict obligations to discharge their duty to their servants, as those which lie upon servants to be obedient and dutiful to them.* Forbearing threatening; advising, moderating threatening, and remitting the evils which you threaten them with. Remember that your servants are made of the same mould with yourselves, and therefore be not tyrannical and imperious over them, *knowing that your master also is in heaven; some copies read both your and their master: You have a master to obey, who makes this your duty; and you and they are but fellow-servants in respect of Christ.* That you will be as punishable by him for the neglect of your duty, or for acting contrary to it, as any others of meaner condition in the world. You are therefore to shew favour to others, as ever you expect to find favour with him; and you will never be a match for him, though you may be too hard for your servants. *Neither is there respect of persons with him; a rich, a wealthy, and a dignified master, if he be unjust, imperious, and abusive, is not a jot the nearer being accepted of God, for his riches, wealth and honour.* He will call masters and servants to an impartial account for their carriage one to another; and will neither spare the one, because they are more advanced nor be severe towards they other, because they are inferior and mean in the world. If masters and servants would both consider their relation and obligation to God, and the account they must shortly give to him, they would be more careful in their duty to each other.

Thus the apostle concludes his exhortation to relative duties.

10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11. Put on the whole armour

armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. 14. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness: 15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Here is a general exhortation to constancy in our Christian course, and to courage in our Christian warfare. Is not our life a warfare? It is so; for we struggle with the common calamities of human life. Is not our religion much more a warfare? It is so; for we struggle with the opposition of the powers of darkness, and with many enemies who would keep us from God and heaven. We have enemies to fight against, a captain to fight for, a banner to fight under, and certain rules of war by which we are to govern ourselves. Finally, my brethren, ver. 10. *q. d.* there yet remains, that you apply yourself to your work and duty as Christian soldiers. Now it is requisite that a soldier have a good heart, and that he be well armed. If Christians be soldiers of Jesus Christ,

1. They must see that they have a good heart for it. This is prescribed here. *Be strong in the Lord, &c.* Those who have so many battles to fight, and who, in their way to heaven, must dispute every step, like a pass, with dint of sword, had need of a great deal of courage. *Be strong therefore, strong for service, strong for suffering, strong for fighting.* Let a soldier be never so well armed without, if he have not within a good heart, his armour will stand him in little stead. Note, *Spiritual strength and courage are very necessary for our spiritual warfare.* Be strong in the Lord; either in his cause, and for his sake; or rather in his strength. We have no sufficient strength of our own. Our natural courage is as perfect cowardice; and our natural strength as perfect weakness; but all our sufficiency is of God. In his strength we must go forth and go on. By the actings of faith, we must fetch in grace and help from heaven, to enable us to do that which of ourselves we cannot do, in our Christian work and warfare. We should strip up ourselves to resist temptations in a reliance upon God's all-sufficiency, and the omnipotence of his right.

2. They must be well armed. *Put on the armour of God, ver. 11. i. e.* make use of all the proper defensives and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan, *e. g.* get and exercise all the Christian graces, the whole armour, that no part be naked and exposed to the enemy. Observe, That *they who would approve themselves to have true grace, must aim at all grace; the whole armour.* It is called the armour of God, because he both prepares and bestows it. We have no armour of our own, that will be armour of proof in a trying time. Nothing will stand us in stead but the armour of God. This armour is prepared for us, but we must put it on, *i. e.* we must pray for grace; we must use the grace given us, and draw it out into act and exercise as there is occasion. The reason assigned, why the Christian should be completely armed, is, *that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, i. e.* that ye may be able to hold out, and to overcome, notwithstanding all his assaults, both of force and fraud; all the deceits he puts upon us, all the snares he lays for us, and all his machinations against us. That the apostle enlarges upon here, and shews,

1. What our danger is, and what need we have to put on this whole armour: Considering what sort of enemies we have to deal with, the devil and all the powers of darkness. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, &c. ver. 12.* The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary human enemies; not barely with men compounded of *flesh and blood*; nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered; but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world. We have to do,

1. With a subtle enemy; an enemy that uses wiles and stratagems, as ver. 11. he has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls. Hence he is called a *serpent* for subtilty; an *old serpent*, experienced in the art and trade of tempting.

(2.) He is a powerful enemy. *Principalities and powers, and rulers.* They are numerous, they are vigorous; and rule in those heathen nations which are yet in darkness. The dark parts of the world are the seat of Satan's empire. Yea, they are usurping princes over all men, who are yet in a state of sin and ignorance. *Satan's is the kingdom of darkness; whereas Christ's is a kingdom of light.*

(3.) There are *spiritual* enemies. *Spiritual wickedness in high places;* or wicked spirits, so some translate it. The devil is a spirit, a wicked spirit; and our danger is the greater from our enemies because they are unseen, and assault us ere we are aware of them. The devils are *wicked spirits*, and they do chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to spiritual wickednesses, pride, envy, malice, &c. These enemies are said to be in *high places*, or in heavenly places; so the word is: Taking heaven (as one says) for the whole *expansum*, or spreading out of the air betwixt the earth and the stars; the air being the place from which the devils assault us. Or the meaning may be, *we wrestle* about heavenly places or heavenly things; so some of the ancients interpret it. Our enemies strive to prevent our ascent to heaven, to deprive us of the heavenly blessings, and to obstruct our communion with heaven. They assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts; and therefore we have need to be upon our guard against them. We have need of faith in our *Christian warfare*, because we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, as well as of faith in our *Christian work*, because we have spiritual strength to fetch in. Thus you see your danger.

2. What our duty is, *viz.* to take and put on the whole armour of God, and then to *stand* our ground, and *withstand* our enemies.

(1.) We must *withstand*, ver. 13. We must not yield to the devil's allurements and assaults, but oppose them. Satan is said to stand up against us, 1 *Chron.* xxi. If he stand up against us, we must stand against him: set up, and keep up an interest in opposition to the devil. Satan is the wicked one, and his kingdom is the kingdom of sin; to stand against Satan

is to strive against sin. *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day i. e.* in the time of temptation, or of any sore affliction.

(2.) We must stand our ground. *And having done all to stand,* we must resolve, by God's grace not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and he will flee. If we give back he will get ground. If we distrust either our cause, or our leader, or our armour, we give him advantage. Our present business is to withstand the assaults of the devil; and to stand it out; and then *having done all*, that is incumbent on the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, our warfare will be accomplished, and we shall be finally victorious.

(3.) We must stand armed; and this is here most enlarged upon. Here is a Christian in complete armour; and the armour is divine. *Armour of God. Armour of light, Rom. xiii. 12. Armour of righteousness, 2 Cor. vi. 7.* The apostle instances in the particulars of this armour, both offensive and defensive. Here is the military girdle or belt: The breast-plate: The greaves or soldier's shoes: The helmet and the sword. It is observable among them all, there is none for the back; if we turn our back upon the enemy, we lie exposed.

1. Truth or sincerity is our girdle, ver. 14. It was prophesied of Christ, *Isa. xi. 5.* that *righteousness should be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.* That which Christ was girt with, all Christians must be girt with. God desireth truth, *i. e.* sincerity in the inward parts. This is the strength of our loins; and it girds on all the other pieces of our armour, and therefore is first mentioned. I know no religion without sincerity. Some understand it for the doctrine and the truths of the gospel. They should cleave to us as the girdle does to the loins, *Jer. xiii. 11.* This will restrain from all libertinism and licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body. This is the Christian soldier's belt. Ungirt with this he is unblest.

2. *Righteousness* must be our breast-plate. The breast-plate secures the vitals, shelters the heart. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is our breast-plate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. The apostle explains this in 1 *Thes. v. 8. Putting on the breast-plate of love and faith.* Faith and love include all Christian graces: For by faith we are united to Christ, and by love to our brethren. These will infer a diligent observance of our duty to God; and a righteous deportment towards men in all the offices of justice, truth and charity.

3. Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs. *And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, ver. 15.* Shoes or greaves of brass, or the like, were formerly part of the military armour. 1 *Sam. xvii. 6.* And the use of them was to defend their feet against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were wont to be laid privily in the way to obstruct the marching of the enemy: They who fell upon them being unfit to march. *The preparation of the gospel of peace*, signifies a prepared and resolved frame of heart to adhere to the gospel, and abide by it: which will enable us to walk with a steady pace in the way of religion, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that may be in it. It is *called the gospel of peace*, because it brings all sorts of peace; peace of God, with ourselves, and with one another.

It may also be meant of that which *prepares* for the entertainment of the gospel; and that is repentance. With this our feet must be shod: For by living a life of repentance we are armed against temptations to sin, and the designs of our great enemy.

Dr. Whitby thinks this may be the sense of the words. That ye may be ready for the combat, be ye shod with the gospel of peace; *i. e.* endeavour after that peaceable and quiet mind the gospel calls for. Be not easily provoked, or prone to quarrel. But shew all gentleness, and all long suffering to all men; and this will as certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, as did those shoes of brass the soldiers from those gall-traps, &c.

4. Faith must be our shield. *Above all, or chiefly, taking the shield of faith, ver. 16.* This is more necessary than any of them. Faith is all in all to us in an hour of temptation. The breast-plate secures the vitals; but with the shield we turn every way. *This is a victory over the world, even our faith.* We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises, and threatenings; such a faith being of great use against temptations. Consider faith, as it is the *evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for*; and it will appear to be of admirable use for this purpose. And faith as receiving Christ; and the benefits of redemption, so deriving grace from him is like a shield, a sort of universal defence. Our enemy the devil is here called the *wicked one*. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called *darts*, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and the deep wounds that they give to the soul. *Fiery darts*, by way of allusion to the poisonous darts which were wont to inflame the parts which were wounded with them, and therefore were so called; as the serpents with poisonous stings are called *fiery serpents*. Violent temptations by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts which Satan shoots at us. Faith is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts: where as we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us. Observe, *Faith acted upon the word of God, and applying that; acted upon the grace of Christ, and improving that, quenches the darts of temptations.*

5. Salvation must be our helmet, ver. 17. *i. e.* Hope, which has salvation for its object; so 1 *Thess. v. 8.* The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation well founded, and well built, will both purify the soul, and keep it from being defiled by Satan, and it will comfort the soul and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan. He would tempt us to despair; but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him.

6. The word of God, is the sword of the Spirit. The sword is a very necessary and useful part of a soldier's furniture. The word of God is very necessary, and of great use to the Christian, in order to his maintaining, and his succeeding, in the spiritual warfare. It is called the sword of the Spirit, because it is of the Spirit's inditing: And he renders it efficacious and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. Like Goliath's sword, none like that; with this we assault the assailants. Scripture arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel a temptation with. Christ himself resisted Satan's temptation with, *It is written, Matth. iv. 1, 2, &c.* This being hid in the heart will preserve from sin, *Psal. cxix. 11.* And will mortify and kill those lusts and corruptions that are latent there.

7. Prayer must buckle on all the other parts of our Christian armour, ver. 18. we must join prayer with all these graces, for our defence against these spiritual enemies: imploring help and assistance of God, as the case requires. And we must pray *always*: Not as though we were to do nothing else but pray. For there are other duties of religion, and of our respective stations in the world, that are to be done in their place and season. But we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be constant to them. We must pray upon all occasions, and as often as our own and others necessities call us to it. We must always keep up a disposition to prayer; and

should intermix ejaculatory prayers with other duties, and with common business. Though set and solemn prayer may sometimes be unseasonable, (as when other duties are to be done) yet pious ejaculation can never be so. We must pray *with all prayers and supplications*; with all kinds of prayer, public, private, and secret; social and solitary; solemn and sudden: With all the parts of prayer; confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings for favours received. We must pray *in the Spirit*, i. e. our spirits must be employed in the duty: and we must do it by the grace of God's good spirit. We must *watch thereunto*, endeavouring to keep our hearts in a praying frame; and take all occasions, and improve all opportunities for the duty. Watch to all the motions of our own hearts towards the duty. When God saith, *Seek ye my face*; our hearts must comply, *Psalms xxvii. 8.* This we must do *with all perseverance*. We must abide by the duty of prayer, whatever change there may be in our outward circumstances; and we must continue in it as long as we live in the world. We must *persevere in a particular prayer*; not cutting it short, when our hearts are disposed to enlarge, and there is time for it, and our occasions call for it. We must likewise *persevere in particular requests*, notwithstanding some present discouragements and repulses. And we must pray *with supplication*, not for ourselves only, but *for all saints*; for we are members one of another. Observe, *None are so much saints, and in so good a condition in this world, but they need our prayers: and they ought to have them.*

Now from hence the apostle passeth to the conclusion of the epistle.

19. And for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel: 20. For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. 21. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: 22. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. 23. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, Amen.

Here, 1. He desires their prayers for him, ver. 19. Having mentioned supplication for saints, he puts himself into the number. *We must pray for all saints; and particularly for God's faithful ministers.* Brethren pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified. Observe, What it is he would have them pray for in his behalf; that utterance may be given unto me; that I may be enlarged from my present restraints, and so have liberty to propagate the faith of Christ: and that I may have ability to express myself in a suitable and becoming manner: And that I may open my mouth boldly, i. e. that I may deliver the whole counsel of God, without any base fear, shame, or partiality. To make known the mystery of the gospel; some understand it of that part of the gospel which concerns the calling of the Gentiles, that had hitherto, as a mystery, been concealed. But the whole gospel was a mystery till made known by divine revelation; and it is the work of Christ's ministers to publish it. Observe, St. Paul had a great command of language; they called him *Mercurius*, because he was the chief speaker, Acts xiv. 12. and yet he would have his friends ask of God the gift of utterance for him. He was a man of great courage, and often

signalized himself for it: yet he would have them pray that God would give him boldness. He knew as well what to say as any man: yet he desires them to pray for him, that he may speak as he ought to speak. This argument with which he enforces his request is, that for the sake of the gospel he was an ambassador in bonds, ver. 20. He was persecuted and imprisoned for preaching the gospel; though, notwithstanding he continued in the embassy committed to him by Christ: and persisted in preaching it. Observe, (1.) *It is no new thing for Christ's ministers to be in bonds.* (2.) *It is a hard thing for them to speak boldly when that is their case.* And, lastly, *The best and most eminent ministers have need of, and may receive advantage by, the prayers of good Christians; and therefore should earnestly desire them.*

Having thus desired their prayers,

2. He recommends Tychicus unto them, ver. 21, 22. He sent him with this epistle, that he might acquaint them with what other churches were informed of, viz. how he did, and what he did: How he was used by the Romans in his bonds; and how he behaved himself in his present circumstances. *It is desirable to good ministers, both that their Christian friends should know their state, and likewise be acquainted with the condition of their friends;* For by this means, they may the better help each other in their prayers. And that he might comfort their hearts: by giving such an account of his sufferings, of the cause of them, and of the temper of his mind, and his behaviour under them, as might prevent their fainting at his tribulations, and even minister matter of joy and thanksgiving unto them. He tells them, that Tychicus was a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord. He was a sincere Christian, and so a brother in Christ: He was a faithful minister in the work of Christ; and he was very dear to St. Paul: which makes his love to these Christian Ephesians the more observable, in that he should now part with so good and dear a friend for their sakes, when his company and conversation must have been peculiarly delightful and serviceable to himself. But the faithful servants of Jesus Christ are wont to prefer the public good to their own private or personal interests.

3. He concludes with his good wishes and prayers for them; and not for them only, but for all the brethren, ver. 23, 24. His usual benediction was, *grace and peace*: Here it is, *peace be to the brethren, and love with faith.* By peace, we are to understand all manner of peace: Peace with God, peace with conscience, peace among themselves; and all outward prosperity is included in the word; q. d. I wish the continuance and increase of all happiness to you. And love with faith. This in part explains what he means in the following verse by grace; Not only grace in the fountain, or the love and favour of God; but grace in the streams, i. e. the grace of the Spirit flowing from that divine principle; faith and love including all the rest. And it is the continuance and increase of this that he desires for them, in whom they were already begun. It follows, from God the Father, &c. All grace and blessings are derived to the saints from God, through the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The closing benediction is more extensive than the former; for in this he prays for all true believers at Ephesus, and every where else. *It is the undoubted character of the saints, that they love our Lord Jesus Christ.* Our love to Christ is not acceptable unless it be in sincerity. Indeed there is no such thing as love to Christ, whatever men may pretend, where there is not sincerity. The words may be read, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption*, i. e. who continue constant in their love to him, so as not to be corrupted out of it by any baits or seductions whatsoever: And whose love to him is uncorrupted by any opposite lust, or the love of any thing displeasing to him. Grace, i. e. the favour of God, and all good, (spiritual and temporal) that is the product of it, is and shall be with all them who thus love our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is, or ought to be the desire and prayer of every lover of Christ, that it may be so with all his fellow-Christians. Amen, so be it.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE EPISTLE OF

St. Paul to the PHILIPPIANS.

By Dr. W. Harris.

PHILIPPI was a chief city of the western part of Macedonia, πρώτη της μεριδος Μακεδονίας πόλις, Acts xvi. 12. It took its name from Philip, the famous king of Macedon, who repaired and beautified it; and was afterwards made a Roman colony. Near this place were the *Campi Philippii*, remarkable for the famous battles between Julius Cæsar and Pompey the Great; and that between Augustus and Antony on one side and Cassius and Brutus on the other. But it is most remarkable among Christians for this epistle, which was written when Paul was prisoner at Rome, A. D. 62.

St. Paul seems to have had a very particular kindness for the church at Philippi, which he himself had been instrumental in planting; and though he had the care of all the churches, he had, upon that account, a particular fatherly tender care of this. Those whom God has employed to do any good to, we should look upon ourselves both encouraged and engaged to study to do more good to. He looked upon them as his children, and having begotten them by the gospel, he was desirous of the same gospel to nourish and nurse them up.

1. He was called in an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel at Philippi, Acts xvi. 9. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man at Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. He saw God before him, and was encouraged to use all means for carrying on the good work which was begun among them, and building upon the foundation which was laid.
2. At Philippi he suffered hard things. He was scourged and put into the stocks, Acts xvi. 33. Yet he had not the less kindness for the place for the hard usage he met with there. We must never love our friends the less for the ill treatment which our enemies give us.
3. The beginnings of that church were very small; Lydia was converted there, and the jailer, and a few more: yet that did not discourage him. If good be not done at first, it may afterwards; and the last works may be more abundant. We must not be discouraged by small beginnings.
4. It seems by many passages in this epistle, that the church at Philippi grew a flourishing church; and particularly was very kind to St. Paul. He had reaped of their temporal things, and he made a return in spiritual things. He acknowledges the receipt of a present they had sent him, chap. iv. 18. and that when no church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving besides, ver. 15. and he gives them a prophet's an apostle's reward, in this epistle, which is of more value than thousands of gold and silver.

C H A P.

C H A P. I.

He begins with the inscription and benediction, ver. 1. 2. He gives thanks for the saints at Philippi, ver. 3—7. His great affection and concern for their spiritual welfare, ver. 7—9. His prayers for them, ver. 9—11. His care to prevent their offence at his sufferings, ver. 12—20. His readiness to glorify Christ by life or death, ver. 21—27. He concludes with a double exhortation to strictness and constancy, ver. 27—30.

1. PAUL, and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: **2.** Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have here the inscription and benediction. Observe, 1. The persons writing the epistle, Paul and Timotheus. Though Paul was only *divinely* inspired, he joins Timotheus with himself, to express his own *humility*, and put *honour* upon Timotheus. They who are aged, and strong, and eminent, should pay respect to and support the reputation of those who are younger and weaker and of less note. *The servants of Jesus Christ.* Not only in the common relation of his *disciples*, but in the peculiar work of the *ministry*, the high office of an *apostle* and *evangelist*. Observe, The highest honour of the greatest apostle, and most eminent ministers, is to be the *servants* of Jesus Christ, not the *masters* of the churches, but the *servants* of Christ.

Observe, 2. The persons to whom it is directed.

1. To all the saints in Christ who were at Philippi. He mentions the church before the ministers, because the ministers are for the church, and for their edification and benefit; not the churches for the ministers, and for their dignity, dominion, and wealth. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy,* 2 Cor. i. 24. They are not only the servants of Christ, but the servants of the church for his sake. *Ourself your servants for Jesus' sake,* 2 Cor. iv. 5.

Observe, The Christians here are called *saints*; set apart for God, or sanctified by his Spirit; either by visible profession or real holiness. And they who are not really saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. Observe, It is directed to all the saints, one as well as another, even the meanest, the poorest, and those the least gifts. Christ makes no difference, the rich and the poor meet together in him: And the ministers must not make a difference in their care and tenderness upon these accounts. We must not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons, James ii. 1. *Saints in Christ Jesus*; saints are accepted only by virtue of their being in Christ Jesus, or as they are *Christians*. Out of Christ the best saints will appear *sinners*, and unable to stand before God.

2. It is directed to the ministers or church officers; with the bishops and deacons. The bishops or elders, in the first place, whose office it was to teach and rule; and the deacons, or overseers of the poor who took care of the outward business of the house of God; the place, the furniture, the maintenance of the ministers, and provision for the poor. These were all the offices which were then known in the church, and which were of divine appointment. The apostle, in the direction of his epistle to a Christian church, acknowledges but two orders, which he calls *bishops* and *deacons*. And whosoever shall consider, that the same characters and titles, the same qualifications, the same acts of office, and the same honour and respect are every where ascribed throughout the New Testament to those are called *bishops* and *presbyters*, as Dr. Hammond and other learned men allow; will find it difficult to make them a different office or distinct order of ministry in the scripture times.

3. Here is the apostolical benediction, ver. 2. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the same, almost word for word in all the epistles; to teach us, That we must not be shy of forms, though we are not to be tied down to them, especially such which are not spiritual. The only form in the Old Testament is that of a benediction, Numb. vi. 23. *On this wise he shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* So in the New Testament, the good which is wished is spiritual good, *grace and peace*; the free favour and good will of God; and all the blessed fruits and effects of it: and that from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ; jointly from them both, though in a different way. Observe, (1.) No peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of divine favour. (2.) No grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and original of all blessings; the Father of light, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, James i. 17. (3.) No grace and peace from God our Father, but in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ as Mediator, is the channel of conveyance of all spiritual blessings to the church, and directs the disposal of them to all his members.

3. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. **4.** (Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.) **5.** For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now: **6.** Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

The apostle proceeds after the inscription and benediction, to *thanksgiving* for the saints at Philippi; he tells them what it was he thanked God for upon their account. Observe here, 1. Paul remembered them: he bore them much in his thoughts; and though they were out of sight, and he was at a distance from them, yet they were not out of his mind. Or, *Upon every mention of you*; ἐν παντί τῇ μνήμῃ ὑμῶν. As he often thought of them, so he often spoke of them, and delighted to hear them spoken of. The very mention of them was grateful to him: it is a pleasure to hear of the welfare of an absent friend.

2. He remembered them with joy. At Philippi he was evil entreated; there he was scourged and put into the stocks, and for the present saw little of the fruit of his labour; and yet he remembers Philippi with joy. He looked upon his sufferings for Christ as his credit, his comfort, his crown, and was pleased at every mention of the place where he suffered. So far was he from being ashamed of them, or loth to hear of the scene of his sufferings, that he remembered it with joy.

3. He remembered them in prayer; always in every prayer of mine for you all, ver. 4. The best remembrance of our friends, is to remember them at the throne of grace. Paul was much in prayer for his friends, for all his friends, for these particularly. It should seem by this manner of expression,

that he mentioned at the throne of grace the several churches he was interested in and concerned for, particularly and by name. He had seasons of prayer for the church at Philippi. God gives us leave to be thus free with him: though for our comfort he knows who we mean when we do not name them.

4. He thanked God upon every joyful remembrance of them. Observe, Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer, and whatsoever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. What we have the comfort of God must have the glory of. He thanked God as well as made request with joy. As holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise; so thankful praise is the lip and language of holy joy.

5. As in our prayers, so in our thanksgiving, we must ever God as our God; *I thank my God.* It encourages us in prayer, and enlarges the heart in praise, to see every mercy come from the hand of God as our God. *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you:* We must thank our God for other graces and comforts, and gifts and usefulness, as we receive the benefit of them and God receives glory by them.

But what is the matter of this thanksgiving?

1. He gives thanks to God for the comforts he had in them, ver. 5. for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Observe, That gospel fellowship is a good fellowship; and the meanest Christians have fellowship in the gospel with the greatest apostles, for the gospel salvation is a common salvation, Jude 3. and they obtain like precious faith with them, 2 Pet. i. 1. They who sincerely receive and embrace the gospel, have fellowship in it, from the very first day; a new-born Christian, if he is true born, is interested in all the promises and privileges of the gospel from the first day of his becoming such. Until now; Observe, That it is a great comfort to ministers, when they who begin well, hold on and persevere.

Some by their fellowship in the gospel, understand their liberality towards the propagating of the gospel, and translate *κοινωνία*, not communion, but communication. But comparing it with St. Paul's thanksgiving on the account of other churches, it rather seems to be taken more generally, for the fellowship which they had in faith and hope and holy love, with all good Christians: A fellowship in gospel-promises, ordinances, privileges, and hopes: and this from the first day until now.

2. For the confidence he had concerning them, ver. 6. *Bring confident of this very thing, &c.* Observe, That the confidence of Christians is the great comfort of Christians, and that we may fetch matter of praise from our hopes as well as from our joys; we must give thanks not only for what we have the present possession and evidence of, but what we have the future prospect of. Paul speaks with much confidence concerning the good estate of others, hoping well concerning them in the judgment of charity, and being confident in the judgment of faith, that if they were sincere they should be happy. *That he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.* A good work among you, ἐν ὑμῖν, so it may be read; understand it in the general, of the planting the church among them. He who hath planted Christianity in the world, will preserve it as long as the world stands. Christ will have a church till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body completed. The church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But it is rather to be applied to particular persons, and then it speaks of the certain accomplishment of the work of grace wherever it is begun.

Observe here, (1.) The work of grace is a good work, a blessed work: for it makes us good, and is an earnest of good to us. It makes us like God, and fits us for the enjoyment of God. That may be well called a good work which does us the greatest good.

(2.) Wherever this good work is begun, it is of God's beginning: *He hath begun a good work in you.* We could not begin it ourselves, for we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; and what can dead men do towards raising themselves to life: or how can they begin to act, till they are enlivened in the same respect in which they are said to be dead? It is God who quickeneth them who are thus dead. Eph. ii. 1. Coloss. ii. 12.

(3.) The work of grace is but begun in this life; it is not finished here, as long as we are in this imperfect state, there is still something more to be done.

(4.) If the same God who begins the good work, did not undertake the carrying on and finishing it, it would lie for ever unfinished: He must perform it who began it.

(5.) We may be confident or well persuaded that God not only will not forsake, but that he will finish and crown the work of his own hands. For, as for God his work is perfect.

(6.) The work of grace will never be perfect till the day of Jesus Christ, i. e. the day of his appearance; when he shall come to judge the world, and finish his mediation, then this work will be complete, and the top stone will be brought forth with shouting. We have the same expression, ver. 10.

7. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, in as much as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. **8.** For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

The apostle expresses the mighty affection he had for them, and concern for their spiritual welfare, ver. 7. *I have you in my heart.* He loved them as his own soul, and they lay near his heart. He thought much of them, and was in care about them. Observe,

1. Why he had them in his heart. Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of my grace, i. e. they had received benefit by him and by his ministry: they were partakers of that grace of God which by him, and through his hands was communicated to them. This makes people dear to their ministers, their receiving benefit by their ministry. Or, *You are partakers of my grace*, i. e. you have joined with me in doing and suffering: they were partakers of his affliction by sympathy and concern, and readiness to assist him. This he calls being partakers of his grace; for they who suffer with the saints, are and shall be comforted with them; and they shall share in the reward, who bear their part of the burden. He loved them, because they stuck to him in his bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel; they were as ready to appear in their places, and according to their capacity, for the defence of the gospel, as the apostle was in his; and therefore he had them in his heart. Fellow-sufferers should be dear to one another: they who have ventured and suffered in the same good cause of God and religion, should for that reason love one another dearly; or, because you have me at heart; διὰ το ἔχειν με ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν. They distinguish the respects to him, by adhering firmly to the doctrine he preached, and readily suffering for it along with him; the truest mark of respect towards our ministers, is receiving and abiding by the doctrine they preach.

2. The evidence of it. *It is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.* By this it appeared that he had them in his heart, because

because he had a good opinion of them, and good hopes concerning them. Observe, it is very proper to think the best of other people, and as well as we can of them; to suppose as well of them as the matter will admit in all cases.

3. An appeal to God concerning the truth of this, ver. 9. *For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*; having them in his heart he longed after them, i. e. either he longed to see them, longed to hear from them; or he longed for their spiritual welfare, and their increase and improvement in knowledge and grace. He had joy in them, ver. 4. because of the good he saw and heard of among them; yet still he longed after them to hear of more of it among them; and he longed after them all; not only those among them who were witty and wealthy, but even the meanest and poorest: and he longed greatly after them, or with strong affection and great good will; and this in the bowels of Jesus Christ, with that tender concern which Christ himself hath, and hath shewn to precious souls. Paul was herein a follower of Christ, and all good ministers should aim to be so. O the bowels of compassion which are in Jesus Christ to poor souls! It was in compassion to them he undertook their salvation, and put himself to so vast an expense to compass it. Now in conformity to the example of Christ Paul had a compassion for them, and longed after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ had such a love and pity for? And for this he appeals to God: *God is my record*. It was an inward disposition of mind he expressed towards them, which God only is witness to the sincerity of, and therefore to him he appeals. Whether you know it or no, or are sensible of it, God who knows the heart, knows it.

9. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; 10. That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; 11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

These verses contain the prayers he put up for them. Paul often lets his friends know what it was he begged of God for them, that they might know what to beg for themselves, and be directed in their own prayers; and that they might be encouraged to hope they should receive from God the quickening, strengthening, establishing, comforting grace, which so powerful an intercessor as Paul had asked of God for them. It is an encouragement to us to know that we are prayed for by our friends, who, we have reason to think, have an interest in the throne of grace. It is intended likewise for their direction in their walk, and that they might labour to answer his prayers for them: for by that it would appear that God had answered them. Paul in praying thus for them expected good concerning them: it is an inducement to us to do our duty, that we may not disappoint the expectations of praying friends and ministers. He prays,

1. That they might be a loving people, and that good affections might abound among them; *That your love might abound yet more and more*. He means it of their love both to God and one another, and all men. Love is the fulfilling both of the law and of the gospel. Observe, they who abound much in any grace, yet have still need to abound more and more; because there is still something wanting in it, and we are imperfect in our best attainments.

2. That they might be a knowing judicious people; that love might abound in knowledge and in all judgment. It is not a blind love will recommend us to God, but a love grounded upon knowledge and judgment. We must love God, because of his infinite excellence and liveliness; and love our brethren, because of what we see of the image of God upon them. Strong passions, without knowledge, and a settled judgment, will not make us complete in the will of God, and sometimes do more hurt than good. The Jews had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, and were transported by it to violence and rage, Rom. x. 2. John xvi. 2.

3. That they might be a discerning people; This would be the effect of their knowledge and judgment; *That ye may approve the things that are excellent*, ver. 10. Or as it is in the margin, *Try the things which differ*; εἰς το δοκιμαζέειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα. That we may approve the things which are excellent upon the trial of them, and discern their difference from other things. Observe, The truth and laws of Christ are excellent things, and it is necessary that we every one approve of them, and esteem them such. We only need to try them to approve of them, and they will easily recommend themselves to any searching and discerning mind.

4. That they might be an honest upright-hearted people; *That ye may be sincere*. Sincerity is our gospel-perfection, that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and which is the glory of all our graces. When the eye is single, when we are inward with God in what we do, are really what we appear to be, and mean honestly: then we are sincere.

5. That they might be an inoffensive people; that ye may be without offence until the day of Christ: Not apt to take offence; and very careful not to give offence to God or their brethren. To live in all good conscience before God, Acts xxiii. 1. and to exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, Acts xxiv. 16. And we must continue to the end blameless, that we may be presented so at the day of Christ. He will present the church without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 27. and present believers faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, Jude 25.

6. That they might be a fruitful useful people, ver. 11. *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness*, &c. From God is our fruit found, and therefore from him it must be asked. The fruits of righteousness, i. e. the evidence and effect of our sanctification; the duties of holiness springing from a renewed heart, the root of the matter in us; *Being filled with them*. Observe, They who do much good should still endeavour to do more. The fruits of righteousness brought forth for the glory of God and edification of his church, should really fill us, and wholly take us up. Fear not being emptied by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, for you will be filled with them. These fruits are by Jesus Christ, by his strength and grace, for without him we can do nothing. He is the root of the good olive, from which it derives its fatness; we are strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. i. 2. and strengthened with might by his Spirit, Eph. iii. 16. And they are unto the glory and praise of God. We must not aim at our own glory in our own fruitfulness, but at the praise and glory of God; that God may be glorified in all things, 1 Pet. iv. 11. and whatsoever we do we must do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. It is much for the honour of God, when Christians not only are good, but do good and abound in good works.

12. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. 13. So that

my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14. And many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife: and some also of good will. 16. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17. But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. 19. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. 20. According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

We see here the care the apostle takes to prevent their being offended at his sufferings. He was now a prisoner at Rome; this might be a stumbling-block to those who had received the gospel by his ministry. They might be tempted to think, if this doctrine was indeed of God, God would not suffer one who was so active and instrumental in preaching and propagating it, to be thrown by as a despised broken vessel. They might be shy of owning this doctrine, lest they should be involved in the same trouble themselves. Now to take off the offence of the cross, he expounds this dark and hard chapter of his sufferings, and makes it very easy, intelligible, and reconcilable to the wisdom and goodness of God who employed him.

1. He suffered by the sworn enemies of the gospel, who laid him in prison, and aimed at taking away his life; but they should not be stumbled at this, for good was brought out of it, and it tended to the furtherance of the gospel, ver. 12. *The things that happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel*. A strange chymistry of providence this, to extract so great a good out of so great an evil as the enlargement of the gospel by the confinement of the apostle; *I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound*, 2 Tim. ii. 9. They cannot imprison the word of God: that has its free course, though I am confined. But how was this?

(1.) It alarmed those who were without, ver. 13. *My bonds in Christ, or for Christ, are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places*. The emperor, the courtiers, the magistrates, are convinced that I do not suffer as an evil-doer, but as an honest man, and with a good conscience. They know I suffer for Christ, and not for any wickedness. Observe, (1.) Paul's sufferings made him known at court, where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known! and might lead some of them to enquire after the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of. (2.) When his bonds were manifest in the palace, they were manifest in all other places. The sentiments of the court have a great influence on the sentiments of the people: *Regis ad exemplum tota componitur orbis*.

(2.) It emboldened them who were within. As his enemies were startled at them, so his friends were heartened by them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he who hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 8, 9. So it was here, ver. 14. *Many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds*: The expectation of trouble for their religion, in general, perhaps disheartened and discouraged them; but when they saw Paul imprisoned for Christ, they were so far from being deterred from preaching Christ, and praising his name, that it made them the more bold? For they could gladly suffer in Paul's company. If they should be hurried from the pulpit to the prison, they could be reconciled to it, because they should be there in such good company. Besides, the comfort which Paul had in his sufferings, his extraordinary consultations, received from Christ in a suffering state, greatly encouraged them. They saw that they who served Christ, served a good master, who could both bear them up, and bear them out in their sufferings for him. *Waxing confident by my bonds*. Περιπαύωντες. They were more fully satisfied and persuaded by what they saw. Observe the power of divine grace; that which was intended by the enemy to discourage the preachers of the gospel, who was overruled for their encouragement. And are much more bold to speak the word without fear: They see the worst of it, and therefore are not afraid to venture. Their confidence gave them courage, and their courage preserved them from the power of fear.

2. Paul suffered from false friends as well as from enemies, ver. 15, 16. *Some preach Christ even of envy and strife. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely*. Now this would be a stumbling block and discouragement to some, that there were those who envied Paul's reputation in the churches, and the interest he had among the Christians; and endeavoured to supplant and undermine him. They were secretly pleased when he was laid up in prison, that they might have the better opportunity to deal away the people's affections, and laid themselves out the more in preaching, that they might gain to themselves the reputation they envied him. *Supposing to add affliction to my bonds*. They thought hereby to grieve his spirit, and make him afraid of losing his interest; uneasy under his confinement and impatient for release. It is said there should be men who profess the gospel, especially who preach it, who are governed by such principles as these; who should preach Christ in spite to Paul, and to increase the affliction of his bonds. Let us not think it strange, if in these later and more degenerate ages of the church there should be any such.

However there were others who were animated by Paul's suffering to preach Christ the more vigorously. *Some also of good-will and of love*. From sincere affection to the gospel, that the work might not stand, while the workman was laid up. *Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel*. They knew that he was appointed to support and propagate the gospel in the world, against all the violence and opposition of its enemies; and were afraid lest the doctrine should suffer by his confinement. This made them the more bold to preach the word, and supply his lack of service to the church.

It is very affecting to see how easy the apostle was in the midst of all, ver. 18. *Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice*. Note, The preaching of Christ is the joy of all who wish well to his kingdom among men. Since it may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice in it, though it is done in pretence, and not in reality. It is God's prerogative to judge of the principles men act upon, and is out of our line. Paul was so far from envying those who had liberty to preach the gospel while he was under confinement; that he rejoiced in the preaching it, even by those who did it

it in pretence and not in truth: How much more then should we rejoice in the preaching of the gospel, by them who do it in truth, yea though it should be with much weakness and some mistake?

Two things made the apostle rejoice in the preaching the gospel.

1. Because it tended to the salvation of the souls of men, *ver. 19. I know that this shall turn to my salvation.* Observe, God can bring good out of evil; and what doth not turn to the salvation of the ministers, may yet by the grace of God be made to the salvation of the people. What reward can they expect, who preach Christ out of strife, and even, and contention, and to add affliction to a faithful minister's bonds; who preach in pretence, and not in truth? and yet even this may turn to the salvation of others. And Paul's rejoicing in it turned to his salvation too. This is one of the things which *accompanies salvation*, to be able to rejoice that Christ is preached, though it be to the diminution of us and our reputation. This noble spirit appeared in John the Baptist at the first public preaching of Christ. *This my joy therefore is fulfilled: He must increase, but I must decrease,* John iii. 29, 30. Let him think though I am obscured, and his glory be exalted though I, on my ruins. Others understand this expression of the malice of his enemies being defeated, and contributing towards his deliverance from his confinement. *Through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ.* Note, whatsoever turns to our salvation is by the supply of the aids and assistance of the Spirit of Christ; and that prayer is the appointed means of fetching in that supply. The prayers of the people may bring a supply of the Spirit to their ministers, to enable them in suffering, as well as preaching the gospel.

2. Because it would turn to the glory of Christ, *ver. 20.* Where he takes occasion to mention his own entire devotedness to the service and honour of Christ. *According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, &c.* Here observe,

(1.) That the great desire of every true Christian is, that Christ may be magnified and glorified; that his name may be great, and *his kingdom come.*

(2.) That they who truly desire that Christ may be magnified, desire that he may be *magnified in their bodies.* They present their bodies a living sacrifice, Rom. xii. 1. and *yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto God,* Rom. vi. 13. They are willing to serve his designs, and be instrumental to his glory, with every member of their body, as well as faculty of their soul.

(3.) That it is much for the glory of Christ, that we should serve him boldly and not be ashamed of him: with freedom and liberty of mind, and without discouragement. *That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness Christ may be magnified.* The boldness of Christians is the honour of Christ.

(4.) That they who make Christ's glory their desire and design, may make it their expectation and hope. If it be truly aimed at, it shall certainly be attained. If in sincerity we pray, *Father, glorify thy name;* we may be sure of the same answer to that prayer, which Christ had; *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again,* John xii. 28.

(5.) They who desire Christ may be magnified in their bodies, have an holy indifference *whether it be by life or by death.* They refer it to him which way he will make them serviceable to his glory, whether by their labour or suffering: by their diligence or patience; by their living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
22. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose I wot not.
23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:
24. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.
25. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith:
26. That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.

We have here an account of the life and death of blessed Paul: His life was Christ, and his death was gain. Observe, (1.) It is the undoubted character of every good Christian, that to him to live is Christ. The glory of Christ ought to be the end of our life, the grace of Christ the principle of our life, and the word of Christ the rule of it. The Christian life is derived from Christ and directed to him. He is the principle, rule, and end of it. (2.) All those to whom to live is Christ, to them to die *will be gain.* It is great gain, a present gain, everlasting gain. Death is a great loss to a carnal worldly man; for he loses all his comforts and all his hopes: But to a good Christian it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery, and the perfection of his comforts, and accomplishment of his hopes; It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to the possession of the chiefest good. Or, *To me to die is gain,* i. e. to the gospel as well as to myself, which will receive a further confirmation by the seal of my blood, as it had before by the labours of my life. So Christ would be *magnified by his death,* *ver. 20.* Some read the whole expression thus: *To me living and dying Christ is gain,* i. e. I desire no more, neither while I live nor when I die, but to win Christ and be found in him.

It might be thought, if death was gain to him, he would be weary of life and impatient for death. No, saith he, *ver. 22. If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour,* i. e. Christ is. He reckoned his labour well bestowed, if he could be instrumental to advance the honour and interest of the kingdom of Christ in the world. It is the *fruit of my labour.* *Κερας τρυφης; opere prelium.* It is worth while for a good Christian and good minister to live in the world, as long as he can glorify God and do good to his church. *Yet what I shall choose I wot not: for I am in a strait betwixt two.* It was a blessed strait which Paul was in, not between two evil things, but between two good things. David was in a strait by three judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence: Paul was in a strait between two blessings; living to Christ, and being with him. Here we have him reasoning with himself upon the matter.

1. His inclination was for death. See the power of faith and of divine grace; it can reconcile the mind to death, and make us willing to die, though death is the destruction of our present nature, and the greatest natural evil. We have naturally an aversion to death, but he had an inclination to it, *ver. 23. Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.* Observe, (1.) It is *being with Christ,* which makes a departure desirable to a good man. It is not simple dying, or putting off the body; it is not of itself and for its own sake a desirable thing: But it may be necessarily connected with something else, which may make it truly so. But I cannot be with Christ without departing, I shall reckon it desirable upon that account to depart. Observe, (2.) As soon as ever the soul departs it is immediately with Christ. *This day shall thou be with me in Paradise,* Luke xxiii. 43. *Absent*

from the body, and present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9. without any interval between. *Which is far better,* *πολλω γαρ μολλον προσειπον,* very much, exceeding or vastly preferable. They who know the value of Christ and heaven, will readily acknowledge it far better to be in heaven than to be in this world, to be with Christ than to be with any creature; for in this world we are compassed about with sin, born to trouble, born again to it: But if we come to be with Christ, farewell sin and temptation, farewell sorrow and death for ever.

2. His judgment was rather to live a while longer in this world, for the service of the church, *ver. 24. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* It is needful for the church to have ministers; and faithful ministers can ill be spared, when the *harvest is plenteous* and the *labourers few.* Observe, That they who have most reason to desire to depart, yet should be willing to continue in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. Paul's strait was not between living in this world, and living in heaven, between these two there is no comparison: but his strait was between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. Still it was Christ his heart was upon: Though to advance the interest of Christ and his church, he chose rather to tarry here, where he met with oppositions and difficulties, and to deny himself for a while the satisfaction of his reward.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, *ver. 25.* Observe here, (1.) What a great confidence Paul had in the divine providence, that it would order all for the best to him. Having this confidence, that it will be needful for you that I should abide in the flesh, I know that I shall abide. (2.) Whatsoever is best for the church, we may be sure God will do. If we know what is needful for the building up the body of Christ, we may certainly what will be; for he will take care of its interest, and do what is best, all things considered, in every condition it is in. (3.) Observe, What ministers are continued for; *for furtherance and joy of faith,* i. e. our farther advancement in holiness and comfort. (4.) What promotes *our faith and joy of faith,* is very much for our furtherance in the way to heaven. The more faith the more joy, and the more faith and joy, the more we are furthered in our Christian course. (5.) There is need of a settled ministry, not only for the conviction and conversion of sinners, but for the edification of saints, and their furtherance in spiritual attainments.

That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again, *ver. 26.* They rejoice in the hopes of seeing him, and enjoying his further labours among them. Observe, (1.) The continuance of ministers with the church, ought to be the rejoicing of all who will well to the church, and to its interests. (2.) That all joys should terminate in Christ. Our joy in good ministers, should be our joy in Christ Jesus for them; for they are but the *friends of the bridegroom,* and are to be received in his name, and for his sake.

27. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30. Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

The apostle concludes the chapter with two exhortations.

1. He exhorts them to strictness of conversation, *ver. 17. Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ.* Observe, They who profess the gospel of Christ should have their conversation, as becomes the gospel, or in a suitableness and agreeableness to it. Let it be as becomes those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel-promises; and with an unshakable faith, holiness, and comfort. Let it be in all respects as those who belong to the *kingdom of God* among men, and are members and subjects of it. It is an ornament to our profession, when our conversation is of a piece with it. *That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs.* He had spoken in *ver. 26.* of his coming to them again, and had spoken it with some assurance, though he was now a prisoner; but he would not have them build upon that. Our religion must not be bound up in the hands of our ministers; whether I come or no let me hear well of you, and do you stand fast. Whether ministers come or no, Christ is always at hand: He is nigh to us, never far from us; and hastens his second coming; *the coming of the Lord draws nigh,* James ver. 9. Let me hear of you, *That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for faith of the gospel.* Three things he desired to hear of them, and they are all such as become the gospel.

(1.) It becomes those who profess the gospel to strive for it, to use an holy violence in taking the kingdom of heaven. The faith of the gospel is the doctrine of faith, or the religion of the gospel. There is that in the faith of the gospel which is worth striving for: If religion is worth any thing, it is worth every thing. There is much opposition, and there is need of striving: A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who will go to heaven must look about him and be diligent.

(2.) The unity and unanimity of Christians become the gospel; *strive together,* not strive one with another: All of you must strive against the common adversary. One spirit and one mind becomes the gospel, for there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There may be a enmity of heart and affection among Christians, where there is a diversity of judgment and apprehensions about many things.

(3.) Steadfastness becomes the gospel. *Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind:* Be *fixed* and *immoveable* by any opposition. It is a shame to religion when the professors of it are off and on, unfixed in their minds, and *unstable as water;* for they will never excel. They who would strive for the faith of the gospel, must stand firm to it.

2. He exhorts them to courage and constancy in suffering, *ver. 23. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries.* The professors of the gospel have all along met with adversaries, especially at the first planting of Christianity. Our great care must be to keep close to our profession, and be constant to it: whatsoever oppositions we meet with we must not be frightened at them, considering the condition of the persecuted is much better and more desirable than the condition of the persecutors: For persecuting is an *evident token of perdition;* they who oppose the gospel of Christ, and injure the professors of it, are marked out for ruin. But being persecuted is a *token of salvation:* Not that it is a constant mark; many hypocrites have suffered for their religion; but it is a good sign that we are in good earnest in religion.

ligion, and designed for salvation, when we are enabled in a right manner to suffer for the cause of Christ.

Ver. 20. *For to you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to suffer for his name.* Here are two precious gifts given, and both on the behalf of Christ. (1.) To believe in him. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ, who purchased for us not only the blessedness which is the object of faith, but the grace of faith itself; the ability and disposition to believe is from God. 2. To suffer for the sake of Christ, is a valuable gift too. It is a great honour and a great advantage; for we may be very serviceable to the glory of God, which is the end of our creation, and encourage and confirm the faith of others. And there is a great reward attending it too. *Blissed are you when men shall persecute you, for great is your reward in heaven*, Matt. v. 12. And if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. If we suffer reproach and loss for Christ we are to reckon it a great gift, and prize it accordingly; always, provided we carry it under our sufferings with the genuine temper of the martyrs and confessors, ver. 30. *Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me, i. e. your suffering in the same manner as you saw, and now hear of me that I suffer.* It is not simply the suffering, but the cause; and not only the cause, but the spirit which makes the martyr. A man may suffer in an ill cause, and then he suffers justly; or in a good cause, but with a wrong mind, and then his sufferings lose their value.

CHAP. II.

The apostle proceeds to further exhortation to several duties; to be like-minded and lowly-minded, which he presses from the example of Christ, ver. 1.—11. And to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course, ver. 12, 13. And to adorn their Christian profession by several suitable graces, ver. 14—18. And concludes with particular notice and commendation of two good ministers, Timothy and Epaphroditus; whom he designed to send to them, ver. 19—20.

1. **I**F there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies. 2. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: 6. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10. That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The apostle proceeds in this chapter where he left off in the last, with farther exhortations to Christian duties. He presses them largely to like-mindedness, and lowly-mindedness, in conformity to the example of the Lord Jesus, the great pattern of humility and love. Where we may observe,

First, The great gospel-precept pressed upon us; that is, to love one another. This is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. This he represents, ver. 2. by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. We are of a like mind when we have the same love. Christians should be one in affection, whether they can be one in apprehension or no. This is always in their power and always their duty, and is the likeliest way to bring them nearer in judgment. *Flowing the same love.* Observe, That the same love we are required to express to others, others are obliged to express to us. Christian love ought to be mutual love: love, and you shall be loved. *Being of one accord, and of one mind;* Not eviling and thwarting, or driving on separate interests; but unanimously agreeing in the great things of God, and keeping the unity of the Spirit in other differences. Here observe,

(1.) The pathetic pressing of the duty. He is very importunate with them, knowing what an evidence it is of our sincerity, and what a means of the preservation and edification of the body of Christ. The inducements to brotherly love are these.

If there is any consolation in Christ; Have you experienced consolation in Christ? evidence that experience by loving one another. The sweetness we have found in the doctrine of Christ should sweeten our spirits. Do we expect consolation in Christ? If we would not be disappointed, we must love one another. If we have not consolation in Christ, where else can we expect it? They who have an interest in Christ, have consolation in him; *strong and overflowing consolation*, Heb. vi. 18. 2 Thess. ii. 16, and therefore ought to love one another.

2. *Comfort of love.* If there is any comfort in Christian love, in God's love to us, in our love to God, or in our brethren's love to us, in consideration of all this, let us be like-minded. If you have ever found that comfort, if you would find it; if you indeed believe that the grace of love is a comfortable grace, abound in it.

3. *Fellowship of the Spirit.* If there is such a thing as communion with God and Christ by the Spirit, such a thing as the communion of saints, by virtue of their being animated and acted by one and the same Spirit, be ye like-minded: for Christian love and like-mindedness will preserve to us our communion with God, and with one another.

4. *Any bowels and mercies,* i. e. in God and Christ toward you. If you expect the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be ye compassionate one to another. If there is such a thing as mercy to be found among the followers of Christ; if all who are sanctified have a disposition to holy pity; make it appear this way. How cogent are these arguments! One would think enough to tame the most fierce, and mollify the hardest heart.

Another argument he insinuates is, the comfort it would be to him: *Fulfil ye my joy.* It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded, and

living in love. He had been instrumental in bringing them to the grace of Christ, and love of God: Now, faith he, if ye have found any benefit by your participation of the gospel of Christ, if ye have any comfort in it, or advantage by it, fulfil the joy of your poor minister who preached the gospel to you.

(2.) He proposes some means to promote it.

1. *Doing nothing through strife and vain glory*, ver. 3. There is no greater enemy to Christian love than pride and passion. If we do things in contradiction to our brethren, that is doing them through strife: If we do them through ostentation of ourselves, that is doing them through vain-glory: Both are destructive of Christian love, and kindle unchristian heats. Christ came to slay all enemies; therefore let there not be among Christians a spirit of opposition. Christ came to humble us, and therefore let there not be among us a spirit of pride.

2. *We must esteem others in lowliness of mind better than ourselves;* he severe upon our own faults, and charitable in our judgment of others; be quick in observing our own defects and infirmities, but ready to overlook, and make favourable allowances for the defects of others. We must esteem the good which is in others, above that which is in ourselves; for we best know our own unworthiness and imperfections.

3. *We must interest ourselves in the concerns of others, and not in a way of curiosity and censoriousness, or as busy bodies in other men's matters, but in Christian love and sympathy.* ver. 4. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* A selfish spirit is destructive of Christian love. We must be concerned not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in others' prosperity as truly as in our own. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and make his case our own.

Secondly, Here is a gospel pattern proposed to our imitation, and that is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*, ver. 5. Observe, That Christians must be of Christ's mind: We must bear a resemblance to his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. *If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his*, Rom. viii. 2. Now what was the mind of Christ? Why he was eminently humble, and this is what we are peculiarly to learn of him; *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 20. If we were lowly-minded we should be like-minded; and if we were like to Christ we should be lowly-minded. He must walk in the same spirit and in the same steps with the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to suffering and death for us: not only to satisfy God's justice and pay the price of our redemption, but to set us an example, that we might follow his steps. Now here we have the two natures, and two states of our Lord Jesus. It is observable, that the apostle having occasion to mention the Lord Jesus, and the mind which was in him, takes the hint to enlarge upon his person, and to give a particular description of him. It is a pleasing subject, and a gospel minister need not think himself out of the way when he is upon it, any at occasion should be readily taken.

1. Here are the two natures of Christ: His divine nature and human nature.

(1.) Here is his divine nature: *Who being in the form of God*, ver. 6, partaking of the divine nature, as the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This agrees with John i. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God;* a id is of the same import with being the image of the invisible God, Col. i. 15, and the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God;* Did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, *I and my father are one*, John x. 30. It is the highest degree of robbery for any mere man to pretend to be equal with God, or profess himself one with the Father. This is for a man to rob God, not in tithes and offerings, but of the rights of his Godhead, Mal. iii. 8.

Some understand *being in the form of God*, *ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὄντα*, of his appearance in a divine majestic glory to the patriarchs, and the Jews under the Old Testament; which was often called the glory, and the Shechinah: And the word is used in such a sense by the LXX, and in the New Testament: *Mark xvi. 12. He appeared to the two disciples, ἐν ἑστρα μορφῇ*, in another form; *Matt. xvii. 2. μεταμορφώθη*; he was transfigured before them. And, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, i. e. he did not greedily catch at, or covet and affect to appear in that glory: He laid aside the majesty of his former appearances, while he was here on earth; which is supposed the sense of the peculiar expression, *καὶ ὡς ἄνθρωπος*; *καὶ ὡς*. Vid. Bishop Bull's def. cap. ii. sect. 4. *Et alibi*, and Whithy in locum.

(2.) His human nature: *he was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man:* He was really and truly man, took part of our flesh and blood; appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act, and by his own consent. We cannot say that our participation of the human nature is so. And herein he emptied himself; divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of his former appearance, to clothe himself with the rags of human nature. *He was in all things like to us*, Heb. ii. 17.

2. Here are his two estates, of humiliation and exaltation.

(1.) His estate of humiliation. He not only took upon him the likeness and fashion of a man, but the form of a servant, i. e. a mean man. He was not only God's servant whom he hath chosen, but he came to minister to men, and was among them as one who serveth in a mean and servile state. One would think that the Lord Jesus, if he would be a man, should have been a prince, and appeared in splendour. But quite the contrary, he took upon him the form of a servant. He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, of meanness, and poverty and disgrace; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life. But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross. *He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross:* He not only suffered, but was actually and voluntarily obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under, as mediator, and by which he was obliged to die: *I have power to lay down my life; and I have power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father*, John x. 18. And he was made under the law, Gal. iii. 4. There is an emphasis laid upon the manner of his dying, which had in it all the circumstances possible which are humbling; even the death of the cross, a cursed, painful, and shameful death: a death accused by the law: *Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree:* full of pain, the body nailed through the nervous parts, the hands and feet, and hanging with all its weight upon the cross; and the death of a malefactor and a slave, not of a free-man: exposed as a public spectacle. Such was the condescension of the blessed Jesus.

(2.) His exaltation. *Wherefore God also had exalted him.* His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because he humbled himself God exalted him; and he highly exalted him *ὑπερῷον*, raised him to an exceeding height. And exalted his whole person, the human nature as well as the divine; for he is spoken of as being in the form of God, as well

as the fashion of a man. As it respects the divine nature, it could only be a recognizing his rights, or the display and appearance of the *glory he had with the Father before the world was*, John xvii. 5. Not any new acquisition of glory; and to the Father himself is said to be exalted. But the proper exaltation was of his human nature, which seems to be only capable of it, though in conjunction with the divine. His exaltation here is made to consist in honour and power. In honour; *so he had a name above every name*; a title of dignity above all the creatures, men or angels. And in power, *every knee must bow to him*, i. e. The whole creation must be in subjection to him: *Things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*: The inhabitants of heaven and earth; the living and the dead. *At the name of Jesus*; not at the sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus; all should pay a solemn homage. And that *every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*; every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer; and that *all power in heaven and earth is given to him*, Matt. xxviii. 18. Observe, The vast extent of the kingdom of Christ, it reaches to heaven and earth, and to all the creatures in each; to angels as well as men, and to the dead as well as the living. *To the glory of God the Father*: Observe, It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will that *all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. It redounds to the honour of the Father, whatsoever respect is paid to Christ; *He who receiveth me, receiveth him who sent me*, Matt. x. 40.

12. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence; work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

He exhorts them to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course. *Work out your own salvation*. It is the *salvation of our soul*, 1 Pet. i. 9. and an *eternal salvation*, Heb. v. 9. and contains deliverance from the evils sin had brought upon us, and exposed us to; and the possession of all good, and whatsoever is necessary to our compleat and final happiness. Observe, It concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls. Whatever becomes of other things, let us take care of our best interests. And it is *our own salvation*, the *salvation of our own souls*. It is not for us to judge other people, we have enough to do to look to ourselves; and though we must promote the *common salvation*, Jude 3, as much as we can, yet we must upon no account neglect our own. We are required to *work out our salvation*, *with fear and trembling*. The word signifies *working thoroughly* at a thing, and taking *true pains*. Observe, We must be diligent in the use of all the means which conduce to our salvation. We must not only work at our salvation, by doing something now and then about it but we must work out our salvation, by doing all which is to be done, and persevering therein to the end. Salvation is the great thing we should mind, and set our hearts upon; and we cannot attain salvation without the utmost care and diligence. He adds,

With fear and trembling, i. e. with care and circumspection; tremble for fear lest you miscarry and come short. Be careful to do every thing in religion in the best manner; and fear lest under all your advantages you should so much as *seem to come short*, Heb. vi. 1. Fear is a great guard and preservative from evil.

He urges this from the consideration of their readiness always to obey the gospel. *As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence*, ver. 12. You have been always willing to comply with every discovery of the will of God; and that in my absence as well as presence. You make it appear that regard to Christ, and care of your souls, sway more with you than any other respects whatsoever. They were not merely awed by the apostle's presence, but did it even *much more in his absence*. And because it is *God who worketh in you*; Do you work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you: Work, for he worketh. It should encourage us to do our utmost, because our *labours shall not be in vain*. God is ready to concur with his grace, and assist our faithful endeavours. Observe, Though we must use our utmost endeavours in working out our salvation, yet still we must go forth, and go on in a dependence upon the grace of God. His grace worketh in us in a way suitable to our natures, and in concurrence with our endeavours; and the operations of God's grace in us are so far from excusing, that they are intended to quicken and engage our endeavours. And work out your salvation *with fear and trembling, for he worketh in you*. All our working depends upon his working in us. Do not trifle with God by neglects and delays, lest you provoke him to withdraw his help, and all your endeavours prove in vain. Work with fear, for he works of his *good pleasure*. *To will and to do*; He gives the whole ability. It is the grace of God which inclines the will to that which is good; and then enables us to perform it, and to act according to our principles. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us*, Isa. xlv. 12. *Of his good pleasure*; As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it or pretend to observe it. God's good will to us, is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagement to his creatures but those of his gracious promise.

14. Do all things without murmurings, and disputings: 15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation: among whom ye shine as lights in the world. 16. Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labour in vain. 17. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: 18. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

The apostle exhorts them in these verses to adorn their Christian profession by a suitable temper and behaviour, in several instances.

1. By a cheerful obedience to the commands of God, ver. 14. *Do all things*, i. e. Do your duty in every branch of it, *without murmurings*. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Misd your work, and do not quarrel with it. God's commands were given to be obeyed, not to be disputed. This greatly adorns our profession, and shews we serve a good master, whose service is freedom, and whose work is its own reward.

2. By peaceableness, and love one to another. *Do all things without disputings*, wrangling and debating one with another; because the light

of truth, and the life of religion, is often lost in the heats and mists of disputation.

3. By a blameless conversation towards all men, ver. 15. *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke*. That you be not injurious to any in word or deed; and give no just occasion of offence. We should endeavour not only to be harmless, but to be blameless; not only not to do hurt; but not to come under the just suspicion of it. *Blameless and sincere*; so some read it. Blameless before men, sincere towards God. *The sons of God*: It becomes them to be *blameless and harmless* who stand in such a relation, and are favoured with such a privilege. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. *Without rebuke*, *αὐτοψύχῃ*. Momus was a caping deity among the Greeks, mentioned by Hesiod and Lucian, who did nothing himself, and found fault with every body and every thing: From him all carpers at other men, and rigid censures of their works, were called *Momi*. The sense of the expression is; walk so *circumspectly* that Momus himself may have no occasion to cavil at you, that the severest censurer may find no fault with you. We should aim at it, and endeavour it, not only to get to heaven, but to get thither without a blot; and, like Demetrius, to have a good report of all men, and of the truth, 3 John 12. *In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*, i. e. among the heathens, and those who are *without*. Observe, Where there is no true religion, little is to be expected but crookedness and perverseness; and the more crooked and perverse others are among whom we live, and the more apt to cavil, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. Abraham and Lot must not *strive*, because the *Canaanite and Perizite dwell in the land*, Gen. xiii. 7. *Among whom ye shine as lights in the world*. Christ is the *light of the world*, and good Christians are lights in the world. When God raises up a good man in any place, he sets up a light in that place. Or it may be read imperatively; *Among whom shine ye as lights*? compare Matt. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men*, Christians should not only endeavour to approve themselves to God, but to recommend themselves to others that *they also may glorify God*. They must shine as well as be sincere.

Holding forth the word of life, ver. 16. The gospel is called the *word of life*, because it reveals and proposes to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. *Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*, 1 Tim. i. 10. It is our duty not only to hold fast, but to hold forth the word of life; not only to hold it fast for our own benefit, but to hold it forth for the benefit of others; to hold it forth, as the candlestick holds the candle, which makes it appear to advantage all around, or as the luminaries of the heavens which shed their influence far and wide. This Paul tells them would be his joy that *I may rejoice in the day of Christ*. Not only rejoice in your steadfastness, but in your usefulness. He would have them think his pains well bestowed, and that he had not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.

Observe, (1.) The work of the ministry requires the putting forth of the whole man; All that is within us is little enough to be employed in it; as in running and labouring. Running, notes vehemence and vigour, and continual pressing forward; labouring, constancy, and close application.

(2.) It is a great joy to ministers, when they perceive that they have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain; and it will be their rejoicing in the day of Christ, when their converts will be then crown'd. *What is hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy*, 1 Thess. ii. 19.

The apostle not only ran and laboured for them with satisfaction, but shews that he was ready to suffer for their good, ver. 17. *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith: I joy and rejoice with you all*. He could reckon himself happy, if he could promote the honour of Christ, the edification of the church, and the welfare of the souls of men: though it were not only by hazarding, but by laying down his life; He could willingly be a sacrifice at their altars, to serve the faith of God's elect. Could Paul think it worth the while to shed his blood for the service of the church; and shall we think much to take a little pains? Is not that worth our labour, which we thought worth his life? *If I be offered, or poured out as the wine of the drink offerings*, *συνδοχῇ*, 2 Tim. iv. 6. *I am now ready to be offered*. He could rejoice to seal his doctrine with his blood, ver. 18. *For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me*. It is the will of God that good Christians should be much in rejoicing; and they who are happy in good ministers, have a great deal of reason to joy and rejoice with them. If the minister loves the people, and is willing to *spend and be spent* for their welfare, the people have reason to love the minister, and to *joy and rejoice with him*.

19. But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. 20. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. 21. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. 22. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. 23. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24. But I trust in the Lord, that I also myself shall come shortly. 25. Yet I suppose it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants. 26. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation: 30. Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me.

St. Paul takes particular notice of two good ministers; for though he was himself a great apostle, and *laboured more abundantly than they all*, yet he took all occasions to speak with respect of those who are far his inferiours.

(1.) He speaks of Timothy, whom he intended to send to the Philippians, that he might have an account of their *state*. See Paul's care of the churches

churches, and the comfort he had in their well-doing. He was in pain when he had not heard of them a good while, and therefore would send Timothy to inquire, and bring him an account. *For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state.* Timothy was a non-such. There were, no doubt, many good ministers, who were in care for the souls of those for whom they preached: but none comparable to Timothy; a man of an excellent spirit, and tender heart; *who will naturally care for your state.* Observe, It is best with us, when our duty becomes in a manner natural to us. Timothy was a genuine son of blessed Paul, and walked in the same spirit and the same steps. *Naturally*, i. e. sincerely and not in pretence only: with a willing heart and upright view, so agreeably to the make of his mind. Note, 1. It is the duty of ministers to care for the state of their people, and be concerned for their welfare; *I seek not your's but you,* 2 Cor. xii. 14. 2. It is a rare thing to find one who doth it naturally; such a one is remarkable and distinguished among his brethren.

All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, ver. 21. What, did Paul say this in haste, as David said, *all men are liars*? Psa. cxviii. 11. Was there so general a corruption among ministers so early, that there was not one among them who cared for the state of their people; We must not understand it so; he means the generality; *all*, i. e. either the most, or all in comparison of Timothy. Note, Seeking our own interests with the neglect of Jesus Christ is a very great sin, and very common among Christians and ministers. We are apt to prefer our own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty; the things of our own pleasure and reputation, before the things of Christ's kingdom, and his honour and interest in the world; but Timothy was none of these.

Ye knew the proof of him, ver. 22. Timothy was a man who had been tried, and had made full proof of his ministry, 2 Tim. iv. 5. and was faithful in all which befel him. All the churches with whom he had acquaintance knew the proof of him. He was a man as good as he seemed to be: and served Christ so as to be acceptable to God, and approved of men, Rom. xiv. 18. *q. d.* You do not only know the name of him, and the face of him, but the proof of him, and have experienced his affection and fidelity in your service: *That as a son with the father he hath served me in the gospel.* He was Paul's assistant in many places where he preached, and served with him in the gospel with all the dutiful respect which a child pays to a father: and with all the love and cheerfulness with which a child is serviceable to his father. Their ministrations together were with great respect on the one side, and great tenderness and kindness on the other. An admirable example to elder and younger ministers, joined together in the same service.

Paul designed to send him shortly; *For therefore I hope to send presently, as soon as I shall see how it will go with me*, ver. 23. He was now a prisoner, and did not know what would be the issue; but according as it turned, he would dispose of Timothy. Nay he hoped to come himself, ver. 24. *But I trust in the Lord, that I also will come shortly.* He hoped he should soon be set at liberty, and be able to give them a visit. Paul desired his liberty, not that he might take his pleasure but that he might do good. *I trust in the Lord.* He expresses his hope and confidence of seeing them, with an humble dependance and submission to the divine will, 1 Cor. iv. 19. *But I will come to you shortly if the Lord will*, James iv. 15. *For that you ought to trust the Lord will we shall live, or do this and that*: so Acts xviii. 21. and Heb. vi. 3.

(2.) Concerning Epaphroditus, whom he calls his brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, i. e. his Christian brother, to whom he bore a tender affection; and his companion in the work and sufferings of the gospel; who submitted to the same labours and hardships with himself: and their messenger, i. e. one who was sent by them to him; probably to consult him about some affair relating to their church, or to bring a present from them for his relief; for he adds, and *he who ministered to my wants.* He seems to be the same who is elsewhere called Epaphras, Coloss. iv. 12. He had an earnest desire to come to them, and Paul was willing he should. It seems,

1. Epaphroditus had been sick. *Then had heard that he had been sick*, ver. 20. And, indeed he was sick, ver. 27. Sick-ness is a calamity common to men, to good men and ministers. But why did not the apostle heal him, who was endued with a power of curing diseases, as well as raising the dead? Acts xx. 13. Probably because that was intended as a sign to others, and to confirm the truth of the gospel, and therefore needed not to be cured; and towards another: *These signs shall follow them that believe; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* Mark xvi. 17, 18. And perhaps, they had not that power at all times, and at their own discretion, but only when some great end was to be served by it, and when God saw fit. It was proper to Christ, who had the Spirit *a more abundantly*.

2. The Philippians were exceeding sorry to hear of his sickness. They were full of heaviness as well as he in on the tidings of it: For he was one, it seems, they had a particular respect and affection for, and thought fit to choose out to send to the apostle.

3. It pleased God to recover and spare him; but God had mercy upon him, ver. 27. The apostle owns it as a great mercy to himself, as well as to Epaphroditus and others: Though the church was blessed at that time with extraordinary gifts, they could even then ill spare a good minister. He was sorely touched with the thoughts of so great a loss; Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow, i. e. Besides the sorrow of my own imprisonment, I should have the sorrow of his death. Or perhaps some other good ministers had died lately; which had been a great affliction to him; and if this had died now, it would have been a fresh grief to him, and sorrow added to sorrow.

4. Epaphroditus was willing to make a visit to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick. *Then when he saw him again he was very glad*, ver. 28. That you may yourselves see how well he is recovered, and what reason you have of thankfulness and joy upon his account. He gave himself the pleasure of comforting them by the sight of so dear a friend.

5. Paul recommends him to their esteem and affection: *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation*; account such men valuable who are zealous and faithful, and let them be highly loved and regarded, shew your joy and respect by all the expressions of hearty affection and good opinion. It seems he had caught his illness in the work of God: *It was for the work of Christ that he was nigh to death, and to supply their lack of service to him.* The apostle does not blame him for his indiscretion in hazarding his life, but reckons they ought to love him the more upon that account. Observe, (1.) They who truly love Christ, and are hearty in the interests of his kingdom, will think it very well worth their while to hazard their health and life to do him service, and promote the edification of his church. Observe, (2.) They were to receive him with joy, as newly recovered from sickness. It is an endearing consideration to have our mercies restored to us after danger of removal: and should make them the more valued and improved. What is given us to answer to prayer, should be received with great thankfulness and joy.

C H A P. III.

He cautions them against judaizing seducers, ver. 1—4. *Proposes his own example; and here he enumerates the privileges of his Jewish state which he rejected*, ver. 4—8. *And he describes the matter of his own choice*, ver. 9—14. *And closes with an exhortation to beware of wicked men, and to follow his example*, ver. 17—21.

1. **F**INALLY, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. 2. Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision. 3. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

It seems the church of the Philippians, though a faithful and flourishing church, was disturbed by the judaizing teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses, and mix the observances of it, with the doctrine of Christ and his institutions. He begins the chapter with warnings against these seducers.

1. He exhorts them to rejoice in the Lord, ver. 1. to rest satisfied in the interest they had in him, and the benefit they hoped for by him. It is the character and temper of sincere Christians to rejoice in Christ Jesus. The more we take of the comfort of our religion, the more closely we shall cleave to it: The more we rejoice in Christ, the more willing we shall be to do and suffer for him; and the less danger we shall be in of being drawn away from him. *The joy of the Lord is our strength*, Neh. viii. 9.

2. He cautions them to take heed of those false teachers: *To write the same thing to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe*; i. e. the same things which I have already preached to you, *q. d.* what has been presented to your ears, shall be presented to your eyes: what I have spoken formerly shall now be written: to shew that I am still of the same mind. *To me indeed is not grievous.* Observe, 1. Ministers must not think any thing grievous to themselves, which they have reason to believe is safe and edifying to the people. Observe, 2. It is good for us often to hear the same truths, to revive the remembrance, and strengthen the impression of things of importance. It is a wanton curiosity to desire always to hear some new thing.

It is a needful caution he here gives, *Beware of dogs*, ver. 2. The prophets calls the false prophets *dumb dogs*, Isa. lvi. 10. to which the apostle here seems to refer. *Dogs*, for their malice against the faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting at them. They cried up good works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil workers; They boasted themselves to be of the circumcision; but he calls them the concision; they rent and tore the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces; or contended for an abolished right, a mere insignificant cutting the flesh.

3. He describes true Christians, who are indeed the circumcision, the spiritual circumcision, i. e. the peculiar people of God, who are in covenant with him, as the Old Testament Israelites were. *We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* Here are three characters: (1.) They worshipped in the spirit, in opposition to the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament, which consisted of meats and drinks, and divers washings, &c. Christianity takes us off from these things, and teaches us to be inward with God, in all the duties of religious worship. *We must worship God in spirit*, John iv. 24. The work of religion is to no purpose, any further than the heart is employed in it: Whatever we do, we must do it heartily as unto the Lord; and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the divine Spirit, which is so peculiar to the gospel-state, which is the *ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. (2.) They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and not in the peculiar privileges of the Jewish church, or what answers to them in the Christian church; mere outward enjoyments and performances. They rejoice in their relation to Christ and interest in him. God made it the duty of the Israelites to rejoice before him in the courts of his house; but now the substance is come, the shadows are done away, and we are to rejoice in Christ Jesus only. (3.) They have no confidence in the flesh, i. e. those carnal ordinances and outward performances. We must be taken off from trusting in our own bottom, that we may build only on Jesus Christ the everlasting foundation; Our confidence as well as our joy is proper to him.

4. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh; I more; 5. Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.

The apostle here proposeth himself for an example of trusting in Christ only, and not in his privilege as an Israelite.

1. He shews what he had to boast of as a Jew and a Pharisee. Let none think that the apostle despised these things, as men commonly do, because he had them not himself to glory in: No, if he would have glorified and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause to do so as any man. *If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof to trust in the flesh, I more*, ver. 4. He had as much to boast of as any Jew of them all. (1.) His birthright privileges. He was not a proselyte, but a native Israelite; of the stock of Israel. And he was of the tribe of Benjamin, in which tribe the temple stood, and which adhered to Judea when all the other tribes revolted. Benjamin was the father's darling, and this was a favoured tribe. *A Hebrew of the Hebrews*, i. e. an Israelite on both sides, by father and mother, and from one generation to another; none of his ancestors had matched with Gentiles. (2.) He could boast of his relation to the church and the covenant, for he was circumcised the eighth day; he had the token of God's covenant in his flesh, and was circumcised the very day which God had appointed. (3.) For learning, he was a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent doctor of the law; and was a scholar learned in all the learning of

of the Jews; taught according to the perfect manner of the laws of the fathers, *Acts xxiii. 3.* He was a *Pharisee*, the son of a *Pharisee*, *Acts xxiii. 6.* and after the most strict sect of his religion lived a *Pharisee*, *Acts xxvi. 6.* (4.) He had a blameless conversation; touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless: As far as the Pharisee's exaltation of the law went, and as to the mere letter of the law, and outward observance of it, he could acquit himself from the breach of it, and could not be accused by any. (5.) He had been an active man for his religion. As he made a strict profession of it under the title and character of a Pharisee, so he persecuted those whom he looked upon as enemies to it. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.* (6.) He shewed that he was in good earnest, though he had a zeal without knowledge to direct and govern the exercise of it. *I was zealous towards God, as ye are all this day, and I was persecuted this day, unto the death.* *Acts xxii. 3, 4.* All this was enough to have made a proud Jew confident, and was stock sufficient to set up with for his justification. But,

2. The apostle tells us here how little account he made of these in comparison of his interest in Christ, and his expectations from him. *But what things were gain to me, those have I counted loss for Christ,* ver. 7. i. e. those things which he had counted gain while he was a Pharisee, and which he had before reckoned up, *those I counted loss for Christ.* I should have reckoned myself an unspeakable loser, if to adhere to them, I had lost my interest in Jesus Christ. He counted them loss; not only insufficient to enrich him, but what would certainly impoverish and ruin him, if he trusted to them in opposition to Christ. Observe, The apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he himself did; to quit any thing but what he had quitted himself; or venture on any other bottom, but what he himself had ventured his immortal soul upon.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, ver. 8. Here the apostle explains himself,

(1.) He tells us what it was he was ambitious of and reached after. It was the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; a believing experimental acquaintance with Christ as Lord; not a mere notional and speculative, but a practical efficacious knowledge of him. So knowledge is sometimes put for faith. *By his knowledge, or the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many,* *Isa. liii. 11.* And it is the excellency of knowledge. There is an abundant and transcendent excellence in the doctrine of Christ, or the Christian religion, above all the knowledge of nature, and improvements of human wisdom; for it is suited to the case of fallen sinners, and furnishes them with all they need, and all they can desire and hope for, with all saving wisdom and saving grace.

(2.) He shews how he had quitted his privileges as a Jew and a Pharisee. *Yea doubtless;* his expression rises with a holy triumph and elevation, *ἀλλὰ μενέω γε νῦν.* There are five particles in the original: *But indeed even also do I count all things but loss.* He had spoke before of those things: his Jewish privileges: Here he speaks of *all things*; all worldly enjoyments and mere outward privileges whatsoever, things of a like kind or any other kind, which could stand in competition with Christ for the throne in his heart, or pretend to merit and desert. There he had said he *did* count them but loss; but it might be asked, Did he continue still in the same mind, did he not repent his renouncing them? No, now he speaks in the present tense, *Yea doubtless, I do count them but loss.* But it may be said, it is easy to say so, but what would he do when he came to the trial? Why he tells us, that he had himself practised according to this estimate of the case. *For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.* He had quitted all his honours and advantages, as a Jew and a Pharisee, and submitted to all the disgrace and suffering which attended the profession and preaching of the gospel. When he embarked in the bottom of the Christian religion, he ventured all in it, and suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss but dang, *ὥς θάνατον*, *as if thrown to dogs*; they are not less valuable than Christ, but in the highest degree contemptible, when they come in competition with him.

Note, The New Testament never speaks of *losing grace*, in any terms of diminution, but on the contrary represents it as the *fruit* of the divine Spirit and the image of God in the soul of man; as a *divine nature*, and the *seed of God*; and faith is called *precious faith*; and *meekness* is in the *sight of God of great price*, *2 Pet. iii. 4.* *2 Pet. i. 1. &c.*

9. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. 10. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. 14. I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We have heard what the apostle renounced, let us now see what he laid hold on, and resolved to cleave to, and that was, 1st, Christ; and 2^{dly}, Heaven. He had his heart on these two great peculiarities of the Christian religion.

1. The apostle had his heart upon Christ, as his righteousness. This is illustrated in several instances.

(1.) He desired to win Christ; and an unspeakable gainer he would reckon himself if he had but an interest in Christ and his righteousness, and he became his Lord and his Saviour. That I may win him; as the runner wins the prize, as the sailor makes the port he is bound for. The expression intimates, that we have need to strive for him, and reach after him: and that all is little enough to win him.

(2.) That he might be found in him, ver. 9. as the man-slayer was found in the city of refuge, where he was safe from the avenger of blood, *Numb. xxxvi. 5.* Or it alludes to a judicial appearance; so we are to be found of our judge in peace, *2 Pet. ii. 14.* We are undone without a righteousness wherein to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have interest or benefit by it but those who come off from confidence in themselves, and are brought heartily to believe in him. *Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, i. e. not thinking that my*

outward observances and good deeds are able to atone for my bad ones; or that by setting the one over against the other, I can come to balance accounts with God. No, the righteousness which I depend upon is that which is through the faith of Christ; not a legal, but evangelical righteousness. The righteousness which is of God by faith, i. e. ordained and appointed of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord our righteousness, *1st. xiv. 24.* Had he not been God, he could not have been our righteousness: the transcendent excellence of the divine nature, put such a value upon and such a virtue into his sufferings, that they became sufficient to satisfy for the sins of the world, and to bring in a righteousness which will be efficacious to all who believe. And faith is the ordained means of actual interest, and saving benefit in all the purchase of his blood. It is by faith in his blood, *Rom. iii. 25.*

(3.) That he might know Christ, ver. 10. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Faith is called knowledge, *1st. liii. 11.* Knowing him here, is believing in him. It is an experimental knowledge of the power of his resurrection and fellowship of his suffering, on feeling the transforming efficacy and virtue of them. Observe, The apostle was as ambitious of being sanctified, as he was of being justified. He was as desirous to know the power of Christ's death and resurrection killing sin in him and raising him up to newness of life, as he was to receive the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection in his justification.

(4.) That he might be conformable unto him; and that also is meant of his sanctification. We are then made conformable to his death, when we die to sin, as Christ died for sin; when we are crucified with Christ, the flesh and affections of it mortified, and the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by virtue of the cross of Christ. This is our conformity to his death.

2. The apostle had his heart upon heaven, as his happiness. *If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead,* ver. 11. The happiness of heaven is here called the resurrection of the dead, because though the souls of the faithful when they depart are immediately with Christ, yet their happiness will not be complete till the general resurrection of the dead at the last day, when soul and body shall be glorified together. *1st. xxviii.* sometimes signifies the future state. This the apostle had his eye upon, this he would attain. There will be a resurrection of the unjust, who shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt; and our care must be to escape that: but the joyful and glorious resurrection of saints is called the resurrection, *1st. xxviii.* because it is in virtue of Christ's resurrection as their head and first fruits; whereas the wicked shall rise only by the power of Christ, as their judge. To the saints it will be indeed a resurrection, i. e. a return to bliss and life and glory; but the resurrection of the wicked is a rising from the grave, but a return to a second death. It is called the resurrection of the just, and the resurrection of life, *John v. 29.* and they are counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, *Luke xx. 35.*

This joyful resurrection the apostle pressed towards. He was willing to do any thing, suffer any thing, that he might attain that resurrection. The hope and prospect of it carried him on to much courage and constancy through all the difficulties he met with in this world. Observe, 1. He speaks as if they were in danger of missing it, and coming short of it: A holy fear of coming short, is an excellent means of perseverance. Observe, 2. His care to be found in Christ, was in order to his attaining the resurrection of the dead. Paul himself did not hope to obtain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Let me be found in Christ, that I may attain the resurrection of the dead; that is, be found a believer in him, and interested in him by faith.

He looks upon himself to be in a state of imperfection and trial. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,* ver. 12. Observe, The best men in the world will readily own their imperfection in the present state. We have not yet attained, are not already perfect; there is still much wanting in all our duties, and graces, and comforts. If Paul had not attained to perfection, who had reached to so high a pitch of holiness, much less have we. Again, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended,* ver. 13. *ἀπολαμβάνω*, I make this judgment of the case; I thus reason with myself. Observe, They who think they have grace enough, it is a sign they have little enough, and that they have none at all; because wherever there is true grace, there is a desire of more grace, and a pressing towards the perfection of grace. Observe here,

(1.) What the apostle's actions were under this conviction. Considering that he had not already attained, and had not apprehended, he pressed forward; *I follow after,* ver. 12. *διώκω*. I pursue with vigour, as one following after the game. I endeavour to get more grace, and do more good; and never think I have done enough. *If that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* Observe, 1. From whence our grace comes, from our being apprehended of Christ Jesus. It is not our laying hold of Christ first, but his laying hold of us, which is our happiness and salvation. *We love him, because he first loved us,* *1st. iv. 19.* Not our keeping hold of Christ, but his keeping hold of us, which is our safety. *We are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation,* *1 Pet. i. 5.* Observe, 2. What the happiness of heaven is; it is to apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ. When Christ laid hold of us, it was to bring us to heaven; and to apprehend that for which he apprehended us, is to attain the perfection of our bliss.

He adds further, ver. 13. *This one thing I do;* this was his great care and concern. *Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before.* There is a sinful forgetting of past sins and past mercies, which ought to be remembered for the exercise of constant repentance and thankfulness to God. But he forgot the things which are behind, so as not to be content with present measures of grace. He was still for having more and more. So he reached forth, *ἐκτείνωμεν*, stretched himself forwards, bearing towards his point: Expressions of a vehement concern.

(2.) The apostle's aim in these actions. *I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,* ver. 14. He pressed toward the mark. As he who runs a race never takes up short of the end, but is still making forward as fast as he can; so they who have heaven in their eye must still be pressing forward to it in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours and preparations. The fitter we grow for heaven, the faster we must press towards it. Heaven is called here the mark, because it is that which every good Christian hath in his eye: as the archer has his eye fixed upon the mark he designs to hit. *For the prize of the high calling.* Observe, That a Christian's calling is an high calling. It is from heaven as its original; and it is to heaven as its tendency. Heaven is the prize of the high calling: *το βραβεῖον* the prize we fight for, and run for, and wrestle for; what we aim at in all we do, and with reward all our pains. It is of great use in the Christian course to keep our eye upon heaven. This is proper to give us measures in all our service, and to quicken every step we take; and it is of God, from him we are to expect it. *Eternal life is the gift of God,* *Rom. vi. 23.* but it is in Christ Jesus, through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home but by Christ as our way.

15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

The apostle having proposed himself as an example, he urges the Philip-
pians to follow it. Let the same mind be in us which was in blessed Paul. We see here, how he was minded; let us be like-minded, and let our hearts upon Christ and heaven as he did.

1. He shews that this was the thing wherein all good Christians were agreed; to make Christ all in all, and set their hearts upon another world. This is that *whereto we have all attained*. However good Christians may differ in their sentiments about other things, this is what they are agreed in, that Christ is a Christian's all; that to win Christ, and be found in him, is our happiness both here and hereafter. And therefore *let us walk by the same rule*, and mind the same thing. Having made Christ our all to us, to us to live must be Christ. Let us agree to press toward the mark, and make heaven our end.

2. That this is a good reason why Christians who differ in lesser matters should yet bear with one another, because they are agreed in the main matter. *If in any thing you be otherwise minded*. If you differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment as to meats and days, and other matters of the Jewish law; yet you must not judge one another, while you all meet now in Christ as your center, and hope to meet shortly in heaven as your home. As for other matters of difference, lay no great stress upon them. *God shall reveal even this unto you*. Whatever it is wherein you differ, you must wait till God give you a better understanding, which he will do in his due time. In the mean time as far as we have attained, we must go together in the ways of God, join together in all the great things in which you are agreed; and wait for further light in the lesser things wherein you differ.

17. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. 18. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ: 21. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

He closes the chapter with warnings and exhortations.

1. He warns them against following the examples of seducers and evil teachers, ver. 18, 19. *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*. Observe, There are many called by Christ's name, who yet are enemies to Christ's cross, and the design and intention of it. Their walk is a sinner evidence what they are than their profession. *By their fruits you shall know them*, Matt. vii. 20. The apostle warns people against such, (1.) Very frequently; *I have told you often*. We so little heed the warnings given us, that we have need to have them repeated. *To write the same thing is fife*, ver. 1. (2.) Feelingly and affect onately; *I now tell you weeping*. Paul was upon proper occasions a weeping preacher, as Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. Observe, That an old sermon may be preached with new affections; what we say often we may say again, if we say it affectionately, and are ourselves under the power of it. He gives us the characters of those who are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

(1.) *Whose God is their belly*, i. e. They mind nothing but their sensual appetites. A wretched idol it is, and a scandal for any, but especially for Christians to sacrifice the favour of God, the peace of their conscience, and their eternal happiness to it. Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it and make provision for it. The same observance which good people give to God, epicures give to their appetites. Of such he says, *they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own bellies*, Rom. xvi. 18.

(2.) *They glory in their shame*: They not only sin, but brag of it, and glory in that which they ought to be ashamed of. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. They value themselves for what is their blamish and reproach.

(3.) *They mind earthly things*: Christ came by his cross to crucify the world to us, and us to the world; and they who mind earthly things, act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and this great design of it. They relish earthly things, and have no relish of the things which are spiritual and heavenly; they set their hearts and affections on earthly things; they love them. He gives them this character to shew how absurd it would be for Christians to follow the example of such, or be led away by them. And to deter us all from it, he reads their doom.

(4.) *Whose end is destruction*. Their way seems pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. *What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death*, Rom. vi. 21. It is dangerous following them, though it is going down the stream; for if we choose their way we have reason to fear their end. Perhaps he alludes to the total destruction of the Jewish nation.

2. He proposeth himself and his brethren for an example, in opposition to these evil examples. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk, as you have us for an ensample*, ver. 17. Mark them out for your pattern. He explains himself, ver. 20. by their regard to Christ and heaven. *For our conversation is in heaven*. Observe, good Christians, even while they are here on earth, have their conversation in heaven. Their citizenship is there, *πολιτευσμα*, q. d. We stand related to that world, and are citizens of the New Jerusalem. This world is not our home, but that is. There our greatest privileges and concerns lie. And because our citizenship is there, our conversation is there; being related to that world, we keep up a correspondence with it. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his head is and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly. He sets his affections upon things above; and where his heart is, there will his conversation be.

The apostle had pressed them to follow him and other ministers of Christ. Why, might they say, you are a company of poor, despised, persecuted people: who make no figure, and pretend to no advantage in the world; who will follow you? Nay, saith he, but *our conversation is in heaven*. We have a near relation, and a great pretension to the other world; and are not so mean and despicable as we are represented. It is good having fellowship

with those who have fellowship with Christ, and conversation with those whose conversation is in heaven.

(1.) Because we look for the Saviour from thence, ver. 20. *From whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is not here, he is ascended, he is entered within the veil for us; and we expect his second coming from thence, to gather in all the citizens of that New Jerusalem to himself.

(2.) Because at the second coming of Christ we expect to be happy and glorified there. There is good reason to have our conversation in heaven, not only because Christ is now there, but because we hope to be there shortly. *Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*, ver. 21. There is a glory reserved for the bodies of the saints which they will be inflated in at the resurrection. The body is now at the best a vile body, *το σωμα της ταπεινωσεως ημης*, the body of our humiliation: It hath its rise and original from the earth; it is supported out of the earth, and is subject to many diseases, and to death at last. Besides, it is often the occasion and instrument of much sin, which is called the *body of his death*, Rom. vii. 24. Or it may be understood of its vileness when it lies in the grave; at the resurrection it will be found a vile body, dissolved to rottenness and dust; the dust will return to the earth as it was, Eccl. xi. 7. But it will be made a glorious body; and not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe, (1.) The sample of this change, and that is the glorious body of Christ who when he was transfigured upon the mount, his raiment did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, Matt. xvii. 2. He went to heaven clothed with a body that he might take possession of the inheritance in our nature, and be not only the first born from the dead, but the first born of the children of the resurrection. We shall be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brethren, Rom. viii. 22. Observe, (2.) The power by which this change will be wrought: *According to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself*. There is an efficacy of power, an exceeding greatness of power, and the working of mighty power, Eph. i. 19. It is matter of comfort to us that he can subdue all things to himself, and sooner or later will bring over all into his interest. And the resurrection will be wrought by this power: *I will raise him up at the last day*, John vi. 4. Let this confirm our faith of the resurrection, that we not only have the scriptures, which assure us it shall be, but we know the power of God, which can effect it, Matt. xxii. 29. As Christ's resurrection was a glorious instance of the divine power, and therefore he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4. so will our resurrection be; and his resurrection is a standing evidence as well as a pattern of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom will be completely conquered: Not only he who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Heb. ii. 14. But the last enemy shall be destroyed, that is, death, 1 Cor. xv. 26. *Death will be swallowed up in victory*, ver. 54.

CHAP. IV.

Exhortations to several Christian duties, as steadfastness, unanimity, joy, &c. ver. 1—9. The apostle's grateful acknowledgements of the Philippians, kindness to him, with expressions of his own content, and desire of their good, ver. 10—20. He concludes the epistle with praise, and blessing, ver. 21—23.

1. **T**HEREFORE, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. 2. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3. And I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life. 4. Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. 5. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. 7. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

The apostle begins the chapter with exhortations to divers Christian duties.

1. To steadfastness in our Christian profession, ver. 1. It is inferred from the close of the foregoing chapter; *Therefore stand fast*, &c. Seeing our conversation is in heaven, and we look for the Saviour to come from thence, and fetch us thither; therefore let us stand fast. Note, The believing hope and prospect of eternal life should engage us to be steady and even, and constant in our Christian course. Observe here,

(1.) The compellations are very endearing: *My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown*; and again, *My dearly beloved*. Thus he expresses the pleasure he took in them, the kindness he had for them, to convey his exhortations to them with so much the greater advantage. He looked upon them as his brethren, though he was a great apostle. *All we are brethren*. There is a difference of gifts, graces, and attainments; yet being renewed by the same spirit, after the same image, we are brethren; as the children of the same parents, though of different ages, stature, and complexions. Being brethren, (1.) He loved them, and loved them dearly, dearly beloved; and again, *My dearly beloved*. Warm affections become ministers and Christians towards one another. Brotherly love must always go along with brotherly relation. (2.) He loved them, and longed for them; longed to see them, and hear from them; longed for their welfare, and was earnestly desirous of it. *I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*, chap. i. 8. (3.) He loved them and rejoiced in them. They were his joy; he had no greater joy than to hear of their spiritual health and prosperity. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth*, 2 John 4. 3 John 3. (4.) He loved them and gloried in them: They were his crown, as well as his joy. Never was proud ambitious man more pleased with

with the ensigns of honour, than Paul was with the evidences of the sincerity of their faith and obedience. All this is to prepare his way to greater regard.

(2.) The exhortation itself: *So stand fast in the Lord.* Being in Christ, they must stand fast in him, i. e. even and steady in their walk with him, and close and constant unto the end. Or, to stand fast in the Lord, is to stand fast in his strength, and by his grace; not trusting ourselves, and disclaiming any sufficiency of our own; we must be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10. So, stand fast, so as you have done hitherto stand fast unto the end, so as you are my beloved, and my joy and crown; so stand fast, as those in whose welfare and perseverance I am so nearly interested and concerned.

2. He exhorts them to unanimity and mutual assistance, ver. 2, 3, *I beseech Euodias and Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* This is directed to some particular persons. Sometimes there is a need of applying the general precepts of the gospel to particular persons and cases. Euodias and Syntyche, it seems, were at variance, either one with the other, or with the church; either upon a civil account; it may be they were engaged in a law-suit; or upon a religious account; it may be they were of different opinions and sentiments. Pray, faith he, desire them from me to be of the same mind in the Lord, i. e. That they will keep the peace, and live in love; be of the same mind one with another, not thwarting and contradicting; and that they may be of the same mind with the rest of the church, not acting in opposition to them.

Then he exhorts to mutual assistance, ver. 3. and that he directs to particular persons: *I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow.* Who this person was he calls true yoke-fellow is uncertain. Some think Epaphroditus, who is supposed to be one of the patrons of the church of the Philippians. Others think it was some eminent good woman, perhaps Paul's wife, because he exhorts his yoke-fellow to help the women which laboured with him. Whoever was the yoke-fellow to the apostle, must be a yoke-fellow too with his friends. It seems there were women who laboured with Paul in the gospel: not in the public ministry, for the apostle expressly forbids that, 1 Tim. ii. 12. *I suffer not a woman to teach;* but by entertaining the ministers, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, convincing the erroneous. Thus women may be helpful to ministers in the work of the gospel. Now, says the apostle, do thou help them. They who help others, should be helped themselves when there is occasion. Help them, i. e. join with them, strengthen their hands, encourage them in their difficulties.

With Clement also, and other my fellow labourers. Paul had a kindness, for all his fellow-labourers; and as he had found the benefit of their assistance, he concluded how comfortable it would be to them to have the assistance of others. Of his fellow labourers he saith, *Whose names are in the book of life,* i. e. either they were chosen of God from all eternity; or registered and enrolled in the corporation and society to which the privilege of eternal life belongs; alluding to the custom among the Jews and Gentiles, of registering the inhabitants or the freemen of a city. So we read of their names being written in heaven, Luke x. 21. and not blotting his name out of the book of life, Rev. iii. 5. and of them who are written in the Lamb's book of life, Rev. xxi. 27. Observe, There is a book of life; there are names in that book, and not characters and conditions only. We cannot search into that book, or know whose names are written there, but we may in a judgment of charity conclude, that they who labour in the gospel, and are faithful to the interest of Christ and souls have their names in the book of life.

3. He exhorts to holy joy and delight in God: *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice,* ver. 4. All our joy must terminate in God; and our thoughts of God must be delightful thoughts. *Delight thyself in the Lord,* Psal. xxxvii. 4. and in the multitude of our thoughts within us (grievous and afflicting thoughts) his comforts delights our souls, Psal. cxiv. 19. and our meditation of him is sweet, Psal. civ. 34. Observe, It is our duty and privilege to rejoice in God, and to rejoice in him always; at all times, in all conditions; even when we suffer for him, or are afflicted by him. We must not think the worse of him or of his ways, for the hardships we meet with in his service. There is enough in God to furnish us with matter of joy in the worst circumstance on earth. He had said it before, chap. iii. 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord:* Here he saith it again, *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.* Joy in God is a duty of great consequence in the Christian life: and Christians need to be again and again called to it. If good men have not a continual feast, it is their own fault.

4. We are here exhorted to candour and gentleness, and good temper towards our brethren, *Let your moderation be known to all men,* ver. 5. i. e. In things indifferent do not run into extremes; avoid bigotry and animosity: judge charitably concerning one another. The word to *temper*, signifies a good disposition towards other men; and this moderation is explained, Rom. xiv. Some understand it of patient bearing afflictions, or sober enjoyment of worldly good; and so it well agrees with the following verse. The reason is, *The Lord is at hand.* The consideration of our Master's approach, and our final accounts should keep us from sinning our fellow-servants, support us under present sufferings, and moderate our affections to outward good. He will take vengeance on your enemies, and reward your patience.

5. Here is a caution against disquieting perplexing care, ver. 6. *Be careful for nothing;* and *anxious*; the same expression with that Matt. vi. 25. *Take no thought for your life,* i. e. anxious care and distracting thought in the wants and necessities of life. Observe, That it is the duty and interest of Christians to live without care. There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and consists in a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of diffidence and distrust, which is our sin and folly, and which only perplexes and distracts the mind. *Be careful for nothing,* so as by your care to distrust God, and unfit yourselves for his service.

6. As a sovereign antidote against perplexing care, he recommends to us constant prayer: *in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.* Observe, 1. We must not only keep up stated times for prayer, but we must pray upon every particular emergence. *In every thing by prayer.* When any thing burdens our spirits, we must ease our minds by prayer: when our affairs are perplexed or distressed, we must seek direction and support. 2. We must join thanksgiving with our prayers and supplications: we must not only seek supplies of good, but own receipts of mercy. Grateful acknowledgments of what we have, argue a right disposition of mind, and are prevailing motives for further blessings. 3. Prayer is offering up our desires to God, or making them known to him: *Let your requests be made known to God.* Not that God needs to be told either our wants or desires; for he knows them better than we can tell him: but he will know them from us, and have us show our regards and concern; express our value of the mercy, and sense of our dependence on him. 4. The effect of this will be the peace of God keeping our hearts, ver. 7. *The peace of God,* i. e. The comfortable sense of our reconciliation to God, and interest in his favour, and the hope of the heavenly blessedness, and enjoyment of God hereafter, which passeth all understanding; is a greater good that can be sufficiently valued or duly expressed: *It hath not entered into the heart of man,* 1 Cor. ii. 9. This peace will keep

your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, i. e. keep them from sinning under your troubles, and from sinking under them; keep them calm and sedate, without discomposure of passion, and with inward satisfaction. *These shall keep them in perfect peace with those whose mind is steadfast on thee,* Isa. xxvi. 3.

7. We are exhorted to get and keep a good name; a name for good things with God and good men. *Whatsoever things are true and honest,* ver. 8. A regard to truth in our words and engagements, and to decency and becomingness in our behaviour, suitable to our circumstance and condition of life. *Whatsoever things are just and pure;* agreeable to the rules of justice and righteousness in all our dealings with men; and without the impurity or mixture of sin. *Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,* i. e. amiable, and will render us beloved; and will make us well spoken of, as well as well thought of by others. *If there is any virtue, if there is any praise;* any thing really virtuous in any kind, and worthy of commendation. Observe, 1. The apostle would have the Christians learn any thing which was good of their heathen neighbours. *If there be any virtue, think of these things:* Imitate them in what is truly excellent among them; and let not them outdo you in any instance of goodness. We should not be ashamed to learn any good thing of bad men, or those who have not our advantages. 2. Virtue has its praise, and will have. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein: and then whether our praise be of men or no, it will be of God, Rom. ii. 29.

In these things he propoeth himself to them for an example. Ver. 9. *These things which you have learned and received, and heard and seen in me do.* Observe, Paul's doctrine and life were of a piece. What they saw in him was the same thing with what they heard from him. He could propose himself as well as his doctrine to their imitation. It gives a great force to what we say to others, when we can appeal to what they have seen in us. And this is the way to have the God of peace with us, to keep close to our duty to him: *The Lord is with us while we are with him.*

10. But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again: wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. 14. Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18. But I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. 19. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

In these verses we have the thankful grateful acknowledgment, which the apostle makes of the kindness of the Philippians in sending him a present for his support, now he was a prisoner at Rome. And here,

1. He takes occasion from thence to acknowledge their former kindness to him, and to make mention of them, ver. 15, 16. Paul had a grateful spirit: for though what his friends did for him was nothing in comparison of what he deserved from them, and the obligations he had laid upon them; yet he speaks of their kindness as if it had been a piece of generous charity, when it was really far short of a just debt. If they had each of them contributed half their estates to him, they had not given too much, since they owed him even their own souls: and yet when they sent a small present to him, how kindly doth he take it, how thankfully doth he mention it, even in this epistle which was to be left upon record, and read in the churches through all ages! so that wherever this epistle shall be read, there shall this which they did to Paul be told for a memorial of them: Surely never was present so well repaid.

He minds them, that in the beginning of the gospel no church communicated with him as to giving and receiving, but they only, ver. 15. They not only maintained him comfortably while he was with them; but when he departed from Macedonia, they sent tokens of their kindness after him: and this when no other church did so besides. None but they sent after him of their carnal things, in consideration of what they had reaped of his spiritual things. In works of charity we are ready to ask what other people do; but the church of the Philippians never considered that. It redounded so much the more to their honour, that they were the only church who were thus just and generous. Even in Thessalonica (after he was departed from Macedonia) you sent once and again to my necessity, ver. 16. Observe, 1. It was but little which they sent: they sent only to his necessity; just such things as he had need of, perhaps it was according to their ability; and he did not desire superfluities or dainties. 2. It is an excellent thing to see those to whom God has abounded in the gifts of his grace, abounding in grateful returns to his people and ministers, according to their own ability and their necessity. *Ye sent once and again.* Many people make it an excuse for their charity, that they have given once: why should the charge come upon them again? But the Philippians sent once and again: they oftentimes relieved and refreshed him in his necessities. He makes this mention of their former kindness, not only in his own gratitude, but for their encouragement.

2. He excuses their neglect of late. It seems, for some time, they had not sent to inquire after him, or sent him any present; but now at the last their care of him flourished again, ver. 10. like a tree in the spring, which seemed all the winter to be quite dead. Now in conformity to the example of his great master, instead of upbraiding them for their neglect, he makes an excuse for them. *Wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.* How could they lack opportunity, if they had been resolved upon it? They might have sent a messenger on purpose. But the apostle is willing to suppose in favour of them, that they would have done it if a fair opportunity had offered. How contrary is this to the carriage of many to their friends, by whom neglects which really are execrable, are referred

very

very heinously; when Paul excused that which he had reason enough to resent?

He commends their present liberality. *Notwithstanding ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction*, ver. 14. It is a good work to succour and help a good minister in trouble. Herefore what is the nature of true Christian sympathy; not only to be concerned for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. They communicated with his affliction, in relieving him under it. He who saith, *be ye warmed, be ye filled, and giveeth not those things they have need of; what doth it profit?* James ii. 16.

Here saith greatly in it, ver. 10. because it was an evidence of their affection to him, and the success of his ministry among them. When the fruit of their charity abounded towards the apostle, it appeared the fruits of his ministry abounded among them.

4. He takes care to obviate the ill use some might make of his taking so much notice of what was sent him. It did not proceed either from discontent and distrust, ver. 11. or from covetousness and love of the world, ver. 12.

(1.) It did not come from discontent or distrust of providence. *Not that I speak in respect of want*, ver. 11. Not in respect of any want he felt, or of any want he feared. As to the former, he was content with the little he had, and that satisfied him; as to the latter, he depended upon the providence of God to provide for him from day to day, and that satisfied him. So that he did not speak in respect of want any way. *For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content*. We have here an account of Paul's learning, not that which he got at the feet of Gamaliel, but that which he got at the feet of Christ. He had learned to be content; and that was a lesson he had as much need to learn as most men, considering the hardships and sufferings with which he was exercised. He was in bonds and imprisonments, and necessities often; but in all he had learned to be content, i. e. to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it.

I know how to be abased and I know how to abound, ver. 12. This is a special act of grace, to accommodate ourselves to every condition of life, and carry an equal temper of mind through all the varieties of our state. 1. To accommodate ourselves to an afflicted condition; to know how to be abased, how to be hungry, how to suffer want, so as not to be overcome by the temptations of it, either to lose our comfort in God, or distrust his providence, or take any indirect course for our own supply. 2. To a prosperous condition; to know how to abound, how to be full, so as not to be proud, or secure, or luxurious. And this is as hard a lesson as the other; for the temptations of fulness and prosperity are not less than those of affliction and want. But how must we learn it? *I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me*, ver. 13. We have need of strength from Christ to enable us to perform not only those duties which are purely Christian, but even those which are the fruit of moral virtue. We need his strength to teach us to be content in every condition. The apostle had seemed to boast of himself and of his own strength. *I know how to be abased*, ver. 12. but here he transfers all the praise to Christ. What do I talk of knowing how to be abased, and how to abound? it is only through Christ who strengthens me, that I can do it, not in my own strength. So we are required to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10. and to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. ii. 1. and we are strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, Eph. iii. 16. The word in the original is a participle in the present tense, *ἐν τῷ ενδυναμῶντι με Χριστῷ* and denote a present and continued act, *q. d.* through Christ, who is strengthening me, and does continually strengthen me; it is by his constant and renewed strength I am enabled to act in every thing; I wholly depend upon him for all my spiritual power.

(2.) It did not come from covetousness, or an affection to worldly wealth. *Not because I desire a gift*, ver. 17. i. e. I welcome your kindness, not because it adds to my enjoyments, but because it adds to your account. He desired it not so much for his own sake but theirs. *I desire fruit that may abound to your account*, i. e. that you may be enabled to make such a good use of your worldly possessions, that you may give an account of them with joy. It is not with any design to draw more from you, but to encourage you to such an exercise of beneficence as will meet with a glorious reward hereafter. For my part, saith he, *I have all and abound*, ver. 18. What can a man desire more than enough? I do not desire a gift for the gift's

sake, for *I have all and abound*. They sent him a small token, and he desired no more: he was not solicitous for a present superfluity, or a future supply: *I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you*. Note, a good man will soon have enough of this world; not only of living in it, but of receiving from it. A covetous worldling, if he has never so much, would still have more: but a heavenly Christian, though he hath little, hath enough.

5. The apostle assures them, that God did accept, and would recompense their kindness to him.

(1.) He did accept it. *It is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*. Not a sacrifice of atonement, for none makes atonement for sin but Christ; but a sacrifice of acknowledgement, and well-pleasing to God. It was more acceptable to God, as it was the fruit of their grace; than it was to Paul, as it was the supply of his want. *With such sacrifice, God is well pleased*. Heb. xiii. 16.

(2.) He would recompense it: *But my God shall supply all your wants, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*, ver. 19. He doth as it were draw a bill upon the exchequer in heaven, and leaves it to God to make them amends for the kindness they had shewed him. He shall do it not only as your God, but as my God; who takes what is done to me as done to himself. You supplied my needs according to your poverty; and he shall supply yours, according to his riches. But still it is by Christ Jesus: Through him we have grace to do that which is good, and through him we must expect the reward of it: Not of debt, but of grace; for the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him, because we receive the more from him.

20. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen. 21. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household. 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The apostle concludes the epistle in these verses:

1. With praises to God. *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen*, ver. 20. Observe, (1.) That God is to be considered by us as our Father. *Now unto God and our Father*. It is a great condescension and favour in God to own the relation of father to sinners, and allow us to say to him our Father; and it is a title peculiar to the gospel dispensation: And it is a great privilege and encouragement to us to consider him as our Father; as one so nearly related, and who bears so tender an affection towards us. We should look upon God under all our weakness and fears, not as a tyrant or an enemy, but as a father, who is disposed to pity us and help us. (2.) We must ascribe glory to God as a Father: The glory of his own excellence, and of all his mercy unto us. We must thankfully own the receipt of all from him, and give the praise of all to him. And our praise must be constant and perpetual; it must be *glory for ever and ever*.

2. With salutations to his friends at Philippi. *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus*, ver. 21. i. e. give my hearty love to all the Christians in your parts. He desires remembrance not only to the bishops and deacons, and the church in general, but to every particular saint. Paul had a kind affection to all good Christians.

He sends salutations from those who were at Rome. *The brethren who are with me salute you*, i. e. The ministers and all the saints here send their affectionate remembrance to you. *Chiefly they who are of Cæsar's household*; the Christian converts who belonged to the Emperor's court. Observe, (1.) There were saints in Cæsar's household. Though Paul was imprisoned at Rome for preaching the gospel by the emperor's command; yet there were some Christians in his own family. The gospel early obtained among some of the rich and great. Perhaps the apostle fared the better, and received some favour, by the means of his friends at court. (2.) *Chiefly they, &c.* Observe, That they being bred at court were more complaisant than the rest. See what an ornament to religion sanctified civility is.

4. The apostolical benediction, as usual. *The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all, Amen*, i. e. The free favour and good will of Christ be your portion and happiness.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E E P I S T L E O F

St. Paul *to the* COLOSSIANS.

COLOSSE was a considerable city of Phrygia, and probably not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis; we find these three mentioned together, *chap. iv. 13.* It is now buried in ruins, and the memory of it chiefly preserved in this epistle is to warn them of the danger of the Jewish zealots, who pressed the necessity of observing the ceremonial law; and to fortify them against the mixture of the Gentile philosophy with their Christian principles. He professes a great satisfaction in their *fledfastness* and constancy, and encourages them to *perseverance*. It was writ about the same time with the epistle to the Ephesians and Philippians, *Anno Domini 26.* and in the same place, while he was now prisoner at Rome. He was not idle in his confinement, and the word of God was not bound.

This epistle, like that of the Romans, was writ to them whom he had never seen, nor had any personal acquaintance with. The church planted at Colosse was not by Paul's ministry, but by the ministry of Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, one whom he delegated to preach the gospel among the Gentiles; and yet,

1. There was a flourishing church at Colosse, and one which was eminent and famous among the churches. One would have thought none should have come to be flourishing churches but they which Paul himself had planted; but here was a flourishing church planted by Epaphras. God is sometimes pleased to make use of the ministry of those who are of less note and lower gifts, for the doing great service to his church. God uses what hands he pleases, and is not tied to those of note, that the *excellence of the power may appear to be of God, and not of man,* 2 Cor. iv. 7.
2. Though Paul had not the planting of this church, yet he did not therefore neglect it; nor in writing his epistles does he make any difference between that and other churches. The Colossians who were converted by the ministry of Epaphras. were as dear to him, and he as much concerned for their welfare, as the Philippians or any others who were converted by the ministry. Thus he put an honour upon an inferior minister, and teaches us not to be selfish, nor think all that honour lost which goes besides ourselves. We see in his example, not to think it a disparagement to us to *water* what others have *planted*; or *build* upon the foundation which others have *laid*: As he himself as a *wise master-builder laid the foundation, and another builded thereon,* 1 Cor. iii. 10.

C H A P. I.

The inscription as usual, ver. 1, 2. His thanksgiving. God for what he had heard concerning them; their faith, love, and hope, ver. 3—9. Prays for their knowledge, fruitfulness, and strength, ver. 9—11. Gives them an admirable summary of the Christian doctrine concerning the operation of the Spirit, the person of the Redeemer, the work of redemption, and the preaching of it in the gospel, ver. 12—28.

1. **PAUL**, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother. 2. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse; Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The inscription of this epistle is much the same with the rest; only it is observable,

1. That he calls himself an *apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*. An apostle is a prime minister in the kingdom of Christ, immediately called by Christ, and *extraordinarily* qualified; their work was peculiarly to plant the Christian Church, and *confirm* the Christian doctrine. He attributes this not to his own merit, strength, or sufficiency; but to the free grace and good will of God. He thought himself engaged to do his utmost, as an apostle, because he was made so by the will of God.
2. He joins Timothy in commission with himself, which is another instance of his humility, and though he elsewhere calls him *his son*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. yet here he calls him *his brother*; which is an example to the elder and more eminent ministers, to look upon the younger and more obscure as their brethren, and to treat them accordingly with kindness and respect.
3. He calls the Christians at Colosse *saints, and faithful brethren in Christ*. As all good ministers, so all good Christians are brethren one to another, who stand in a near relation, and owe a mutual love. And towards God they must be *saints*, consecrated to his honour, and sanctified by his grace: bearing his image, and aiming at his glory; And in both these, as *saints* to God, and as *brethren* to one another, they must be *faithful*. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the Christian life, and is the crown and glory of them all.
4. The apostolical benediction is the same as usual. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He wishes them *grace and peace*, the free favour of God, and the blessed fruits of it; all kind of spiritual blessings, and that *from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*; jointly from both, and distinctly from each; as in the former epistle.

3. We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you: 4. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints: 5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel: 6. Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth. 7. As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ: 8. Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Here he proceeds to the body of the epistle, and begins with thanksgiving to God for what he had heard concerning them, though he had no personal acquaintance with them, and knew their state and character only by reports of others. He gave thanks to God, for them, that they had embraced the gospel of Christ, and given proofs of their fidelity to him. Observe, In his prayers for them he gave thanks for them. Thanksgiving ought to be a part of every prayer: and whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Observe, (1.) Whom he gives thanks to; *To God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. In our thanksgiving we must have an eye to God as God; he is the object of thanksgiving as well as prayer; and as the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* in and through whom all good comes to us. He is the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* as well as our Father; and it is matter of encouragement in all our addresses to God, that we can look to him as *Christ's Father and our Father, as his God and our God*, John xx. 17. Observe, (2.) What he gives thanks to God for: For the graces of God in them, which were evidences of the grace of God towards them. *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have to all the saints: For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, ver. 4, 5. *Faith, hope and love*, are the three principal graces in the Christian life, and proper matter of our prayer and thanksgiving. (1.) He gives thanks for their *faith in Jesus Christ*: That they were brought to believe in him, and take upon them the profession of his religion, and venture their souls upon his undertaking. (2.) For their love: Besides the general love which is due to all men, there is a particular love owing to the saints, or those who are of the Christian brotherhood, 1 Pet. ii. 17. We must love *all the saints*, bear an extensive kindness and goodwill to good men, notwithstanding lesser points of difference, and many real weaknesses. Some understand it of their charity to the saints in necessity, which is one branch and evidence of Christian love. (3.) For their hope. *The hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, ver. 5. The happiness of heaven is called their hope, because it is the thing hoped for: *looking for the blessed hope*, Tit. ii. 13. What is laid out upon believers in this world is much, but what is laid up for them in heaven is much more. And we have reason to give thanks to God for the hope of heaven, which good Christians have; or their well grounded expectation of the future glory. Their faith in Christ and love to the saints, had an eye to the *hope laid up for them in heaven*. The more we fix our hopes on the recompence of reward in the other world, the more free and liberal shall we be of our earthly treasure upon all occasions of doing good.

Having blessed God for these graces, he blesses God for the means of grace which they enjoyed. *Wherein ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*. They had heard in the word of the truth of the gospel concerning this *hope laid up for them in heaven*. Observe, (1.) That the gospel is the *word of truth*, and what we may safely venture our immortal souls upon; It proceeds from the *God of truth*, and the *spirit of truth*, and is a *faithful saying*. He calls it, *the grace of God in truth*, ver. 6. (2.) It is a great mercy to hear this word of truth; for the great things we learn from it is the happiness of heaven. *Eternal life is brought to light by the gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. They heard of the hope laid up in heaven in the word of the truth of the gospel. *Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you*, ver. 6. The gospel is preached, and bringeth forth fruit in other nations; it is come to you, as it is in all the world, according to the commission, *Go preach the gospel in all the nations, and to every creature*. Observe, (1.) That all who hear the word of the gospel ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, i. e. be obedient to it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. This was the doctrine first preached. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*, Matt. iii. 8. And our Lord says, *If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17. Observe, (2.) That wherever the gospel comes, it will bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God. *It bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you*. We mistake, if we think to monopolize the comforts and benefits of the gospel to ourselves. Doth the gospel bring forth fruit in us? so it doth in others.

He takes this occasion to mention the minister by whom they believed, ver. 7, 8. *As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ*. He mentions him with great respect, to engage their love to him. (1.) He calls him *his fellow-servant*; to signify not only that they served the same master, but that they were engaged in the same work. They were *fellow-labourers* in the work of the Lord, though one was an apostle, and the other an ordinary minister. (2.) He calls him *his dear fellow-servant*; all the servants of Christ ought to love

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one another, and it is an endearing consideration that they are engaged in the same service. (3.) He represents him as one who was a faithful minister of Christ to them, who discharged his trust, and fulfilled his ministry among them. Observe, Christ is our proper master, and we are his ministers: He does not say, who is your minister: but who is the minister of Christ for you. It is by his authority and appointment, though for the people's service. (4.) He represents him as one who gave them a good word. *Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit*, ver. 8. He recommends him to their affection from the good report he made of their sincere love to Christ and all his members, which was wrought in them by the Spirit of the gospel. Faithful ministers are glad to be able to speak well of their people.

9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: 10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord, upon all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: 11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

The apostle proceeds in these verses to pray for them. He heard they were good, and he prayed that they might be better. He was constant in this prayer; *We do not cease to pray for you*. It may be he could hear of them but seldom, but he constantly prayed for them. And desire that you might be filled with the knowledge, &c. Observe, What it is that he begs of God for them.

1. That they might be knowing intelligent Christians: *filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*. Observe, (1.) The knowledge of our duty is the best knowledge. A mere empty notion of the greatest truths is insignificant. Our knowledge of the will of God must be always practical; we must know it in order to do it. (2.) Our knowledge is then a blessing indeed when it is in wisdom, i. e. when we know how to apply our general knowledge to our particular occasions, and to suit it to all emergencies. (3.) Christians should endeavour to be filled with knowledge; not only to know the will of God, but to know more of it, and to increase in the knowledge of God, as it is, ver. 11. and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, 2 Pet. iii. 18.

2. That their conversation might be good. Good knowledge without a good life will not profit; Our understanding is then a spiritual understanding, when we exemplify it in our way of living. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*, ver. 10. i. e. as becomes the relation we stand in to him, and the profession we make of him. The agreeableness of our conversation to our religion is pleasing to God, as well as to good men.

We walk unto all-well pleasing, when we walk in all things according to the will of God. *Being fruitful in every good work*. This is what we should aim at. *Good words will not do without good works*. We must abound in good works, and in every good work: Not in some only which are more easy and suitable and safe, but in all, all, and every instance of them. There must be a regular, uniform regard to all the will of God. And the more fruitful we are in good works, the more we shall increase in the knowledge of God. *He who doth his will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God*, John vii. 17.

3. That they might be strengthened; *strengthened with all might according to his glorious power*, ver. 11. i. e. fortified against the temptations of Satan, and furnished for all their duty. It is a great comfort to us, that he who undertakes to give strength to his people is a God of power, and of glorious power; where there is spiritual life, there is still need of spiritual strength: strength for all the actions of the spiritual life. To be strengthened is to be furnished by the grace of God for every good work, and fortified by that grace against every evil one. It is to be enabled to do our duty, and still to hold fast our integrity. The blessed Spirit is the author of this strength; for we are *strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inward man*, Eph. iii. 16. The word of God is the means of it, by which he conveys it, and it must be fetched in by prayer. It was in answer to earnest prayer the apostle obtained sufficient grace. In praying for spiritual strength we are not strengthened in the promises, and therefore should not be frightened in our own hopes and desires. Observe, (1.) He prays that they may be strengthened with might: That seems a tautology; but he means, that they might be mightily strengthened, or strengthened with might derived from another. (2.) It is with all might. It seems unreasonable that a creature should be strengthened with all might, for that is to make him almighty: but he means, with all that might which we have occasion for to enable us to discharge our duty or preserve our innocence; that grace which is sufficient for us in all the trials of life, and able to help us in time of need. (3.) It is according to his glorious power. He means according to the grace of God; but the grace of God in the hearts of believers, is the power of God: and there is a glory in this power; it is an excellent and sufficient power. And the communications of strength are not according to our weakness to whom the strength is communicated, but according to his power from whom it is received. When God gives, he gives like himself; and when he strengthens, he strengthens like himself. (4.) The special use of this strength was for suffering work: *That you may be strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness*. He prays not only that they might be supported under their troubles, but strengthened for them; the reason is, there is work to be done even when we are suffering. And they who are strengthened according to his glorious power, are strengthened, (1.) To all patience. When patience hath its perfect work, Jam. i. 4. then we are strengthened to all patience. When we not only bear our troubles patiently but receive them as gifts from God, and are thankful for them. To you it is given to suffer, Phil. i. 29. When we bear our troubles well, though ever so many, and the circumstances of them ever so aggravating; then we bear them with all patience; and the same reason for bearing one trouble, will hold for our bearing another, if it be a good reason. And all patience includes all the kinds of it: and not only bearing patience, but waiting patience. (2.) This is even unto long-suffering, i. e. patience drawn out to a great length: Not only to bear trouble for a while, but to bear it as long as God pleases to continue it. (3.) It is with joyfulness: To rejoice in tribulation; to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods; and rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for his names; to have joy as well as patience in the troubles of life. This we could never do by any strength of our own, but as we are strengthened by the grace of God.

12. Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. 13. Who hath delivered us from the power of

darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. 15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: 16. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. 17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. 19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: 20. And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21. And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. 22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight: 23. If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard: and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister: 24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church: 25. Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word for God; 26. Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28. Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29. Whereunto I also labour striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Here is the summary of the doctrine of the gospel concerning the great work of our redemption by Christ. It comes in here not as the matter of a sermon, but as the matter of a thanksgiving; for our salvation by Christ furnishes us with abundant matter of thanksgiving in every view of it. *Giving thanks unto the Father*, ver. 12. He does not discourse of the work of redemption in the natural order of it; for then he should speak of the purchase of it first, and then of the application of it. But here he inverts the order: because in our sense and feeling of it, the application goes before the purchase. We first find the benefits of redemption in our own hearts, and then are led by those streams to the original and fountain-head. The order and connection of the apostle's discourse may be considered in the following manner,

1. He speaks concerning the operations of the Spirit of grace upon us. And we must give thanks for them, because by these we are qualified for an interest in the mediation of the Son. *Giving thanks to the Father*, &c. ver. 12, 13. It is spoken of as the work of the Father, because the Spirit of grace is the Spirit of the Father, and the Father works in us by his Spirit. They in whom the work of grace is wrought, must give thanks unto the Father. If we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Now what is it which is wrought for us in the application of redemption?

1. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, ver. 13. He hath rescued us from the state of heathenish darkness and wickedness, i. e. He hath saved us from the dominion of sin which is darkness, 1 John i. 6. and from the dominion of Satan who is the prince of darkness, Eph. vi. 12. and from the damnation of hell which is utter darkness, Matt. xxv. 30. They are called out of darkness, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

2. He hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, i. e. brought us into the gospel state, and made us members of the church of Christ, which is a state of light and purity. *Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*, Eph. v. 8. *Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. They were made willing subjects of Christ, who were the slaves of Satan. The conversion of a sinner in the translation of a soul into the kingdom of Christ out of the kingdom of the devil. The power of sin is shaken off, and the power of Christ submitted to. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and makes them free from the law of sin and death, and it is the kingdom of his dear Son, or the Son of his peculiar love, his beloved Son, Matt. iii. 17. and eminently the beloved, Eph. i. 6.

3. He hath not only done this, but hath made us meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, ver. 12. i. e. He hath prepared us for the eternal happiness of heaven, as the Israelites divided the promised land by lot; and hath given us the earnest and assurance of it. This he mentions first, because of the first indication of the future blessedness, that by the grace of God we find ourselves in some measure prepared for it. God gives grace and glory, and we are here told what they both are. (1.) What that glory is: It is the inheritance of the saints in light. It is an inheritance, and belongs to them as children, which is the best security, and the sweetest tenure. *If children, then heirs*, Rom. viii. 17. And it is an inheritance of the saints, proper to sanctified souls. They who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. And it is an inheritance in light; the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and joy, by communion with God who is light, and the Father of lights, James i. 17. 1 John i. 5. (2.) What this grace is. It is a meetness for the inheritance. *He hath made us meet to be partakers*, i. e. suited and fitted us for the heavenly state by a proper temper and habit of soul; and he makes us meet by the powerful influence of his Spirit. It is the effect of the divine power to change the heart, and make it heavenly. Observe, That all who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. As they who live and die un sanctified, go out of the world with their hell about them; so they who are sanctified and renewed, go out of the world with their heaven about them. They who have

have the inheritance of sons, have the education of sons and the disposition of sons. They have the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father, Rom. viii. 15. And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father.

This meetness for heaven is the earnest of the Spirit in our heart; which is part of payment, and assures the full payment. They who are sanctified, shall be glorified, Rom. viii. 30. and will be for ever indebted to the grace of God which hath sanctified them.

§ 2. Concerning the person of the Redeemer. And glorious things are here said of him; for blessed Paul was full of Christ, and took all occasions to speak honourably of him. He speaks of him distinctly as God, and as mediator. As God he speaks of him, ver. 15, 16, 17.

1. He is the image of the invisible God. Not as a man was made in the image of God, Gen. i. 26. in his natural faculties and dominion over the creatures. No, he is the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. He is so the image of God, as the Son is the image of his Father, who has a natural likeness to him; and as he who hath seen him, hath seen the Father; and his glory was the glory of the only begotten of the Father, John i. 14.—xiv. 9.

2. He is the first born of every creature. Not that he himself is a creature; for it is *ἄριστος* *πρῶτος* *γεννητός*, born or begotten before all the creation, or any creature was made: which is the scripture way of representing eternity; and by which the eternity of God is represented to us. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was: when there was no depth, before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth, Prov. viii. 23, 24—26. And it signifies his dominion over all things; as the first-born in a family is heir, and lord of all, so he is the heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. The word, with only the change of the accent, *πρωτόγονος*, signifies actively, the first begetter or producer of all things, and so it well agrees with the following clause, *Ἰδὼς Ἰσίδωρ. Περικλυτὸν ἐπιστ.* 30. lib. 2.

3. He is so far from being himself a creature, that he is the Creator. For by him were all things created which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, ver. 16. He made all things out of nothing: the highest angel in heaven, as well as men upon earth. He made the world, the upper and lower world, with all the inhabitants of both; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made, John i. 3. He speaks here as if there were several orders of angels; whether thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; Which must signify either different degrees of excellence, or different offices and employment. Angels, authorities, and powers, 1 Pet. iii. 22. Christ is the eternal wisdom of the Father, and the world was made in wisdom. He is the eternal Word, and the world was made by the word of God. He is the arm of the Lord, and the world was made by that arm. All things are created by him and for him; *δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ*. Being created by him, they were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure, and for his praise. He is the end, as well as the cause of all things. To him are all things, Rom. xi. 36. *τίς αὐτοῦ καὶ πᾶντα*.

4. He is before all things. He had a being before the world was made; before the beginning of time, and therefore from all eternity. Wisdom was with the Father, and possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, Prov. viii. 22. And in the beginning the Word was with God, and was God, John i. 1. He not only had a being before he was born of the virgin, but he had a being before all time.

5. By him all things consist. They not only subsist in their beings, but consist in their order and dependencies. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the word of his power that they are still upheld, Heb. i. 3. The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God, and made to consist in its proper name. It is preserved from disbanding, and running into confusion.

The apostle next shews what he is as mediator, ver. 18, 19.

1. He is the head of the body of the church: Not only a head of government and direction, as the king is the head of the state, and has a right to prescribe laws, but a head of vital influence, as the head in the natural body; for all grace and strength are derived from him; and the church is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all, Eph. i. 22, 23.

2. He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, *ἄρχη πρωτοτόκου*; the principle, the first-born from the dead. The principle of our resurrection, as well as the first-born himself. All our hopes and joys take their rise from him who is the author of our salvation. Not that he was the first who ever rose from the dead, but the first and only one who rose by his own power, and was declared to be the Son of God, and Lord of all things. And he is the head of the resurrection, and has given us an example and evidence of our resurrection from the dead. He rose as the first-fruits, 1 Cor. xv. 20.

3. He hath in all things the pre-eminence. It was the will of the Father that he should have all power in heaven and earth, that he might be preferred above angels, and all the powers in heaven; he has obtained a more excellent name than they, Heb. i. 4. and that in all the affairs of the kingdom of God among men he should have the pre-eminence. He has the pre-eminence in the hearts of his people above the world and the flesh; and by giving him the pre-eminence we comply with the Father's will. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, John v. 23.

4. All fulness dwells in him, and it pleased the Father it should do so, ver. 19. Not only a fulness of abundance for himself, but redundancy for us. A fulness of merit and righteousness: of strength and grace. As the head is the seat and source of the animal spirits, so is Christ of all graces to his people. It pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in him; and we may have free resort to him: for all that grace which we have occasion for. He not only intercedes for it, but is the trustee in whose hands it is lodged to dispense to us. Of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace; grace in us answering to that grace which is in him, John i. 16. and he fills all in all, Eph. i. 23.

§ 3. Concerning the work of redemption. He speaks of the nature of it, or wherein it consists; and of the means of it, by which it was procured.

1. Wherein it consists. And it is made to lie in two things. (1.) In the remission of sin. In whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, ver. 14. It was sin which sold us, sin which enslaved us, if we are redeemed, we must be redeemed from sin; and this is by forgiveness, or remitting the obligation to punishment. So Eph. i. 7. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (2.) In reconciliation to God, God by him reconciled all things to himself, ver. 20. He is the mediator of reconciliation, who procures peace as well as pardon, and brings them into a state of friendship and favour at present, and will bring all holy creatures, angels as well as men, into one glorious and blessed society at last; things in earth or things in heaven. So Eph. i. 10. He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. The word is *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*, he will bring them all under one head. The Gentiles who were alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, ver. 21. Here see what was their condition by nature, and in their Gentile state, estranged from God, and at enmity with God, and yet this enmity is slain, and notwith-

standing this distance we are now reconciled. Christ has laid the foundation for our reconciliation; for he hath paid the price of it, hath purchased the proffer and promise of it, proclaims it as a Prophet, applies it as a King. Observe, The greatest enemies to God, who have stood at the greatest distance and defiance to him, may be reconciled, if it is not their own fault.

2. How the redemption is procured. It is through his blood, ver. 14. and he has made peace through the blood of his cross, ver. 23. And it is in the body of his flesh through death, ver. 22. It was the blood which made an atonement for the blood to the life; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission, Heb. ix. 22. There was such a value in the blood of Christ, that on the account of Christ's shedding it, God was willing to deal with men upon new terms, and bring them under a covenant of grace: and for his sake, and in consideration of his death upon the cross, to pardon and accept to favour all who comply with them.

§ 4. Concerning the preaching of his redemption. Here observe,

1. To whom it was preached. To every poor creature under heaven, ver. 23. i. e. it was ordered to be preached to every creature, Mark xvi. 15. It may be preached to every creature; for the gospel excludes none who do not exclude themselves. More or less it hath, or will be preached to every nation; though many have sinned away the light of it, and perhaps some have never yet enjoyed it.

2. By whom it was preached. Whereof I Paul am made a minister. Paul was a great apostle, but he looks upon it as the highest of his titles of honour to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul takes all occasions to speak of his office; for he magnified his office, Rom. xi. 13. And again in ver. 25. whereof I am made a minister. Observe, here, (1.) Whence Paul had his ministry: It was according to the dispensation of God which was given to him, ver. 25. i. e. the economy or wise disposition of things in the house of God. He was steward and master-builder, and this was given to him: he did not usurp it, or take it to himself; and he could not challenge it as a debt. He received it from God as a gift, and took it as a favour. (2.) For whose sake as he had his ministry; it is for you, for your benefit: ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake, 2 Cor. iv. 5. We are Christ's ministers for the good of his people: to fulfil the word of God, i. e. fully to preach it, of which you will have the greater advantage. The more we fulfil our ministry, or fill up all the parts of it, the greater will be the benefit of the people. They will be the more filled with knowledge, and furnished for service. (3.) What kind of preacher Paul was. This is particularly represented. He was a suffering preacher. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, ver. 24. He suffered in the cause of Christ and for the good of the church. He suffered for preaching the gospel to them. And while he suffered in so good a cause he could rejoice in his sufferings; rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer, and esteem it an honour to him. And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh. Not that the afflictions of Paul, or any other, were expiations for sin, as the sufferings of Christ were. There was nothing wanting in them; nothing which needed to be filled up: they were perfectly sufficient to answer the intention of them, the satisfaction of God's justice, in order to the salvation of his people. But the sufferings of Paul and other good ministers made them conformable to Christ; and they followed him in his suffering state: so they are said to fill up what was behind of the sufferings of Christ, as the wax fills up the vacancies of the seal when it receives the impression of it. Or it may be meant not of Christ's sufferings, but of his sufferings for Christ. He filled up that which was behind. He had a certain rate and measure of suffering for Christ assigned him; and as his sufferings were agreeable to that appointment, so he was still filling up, one and more what was behind, or remained of them to his share. 2. He was a close preacher: he preached not only in public, but from house to house, from person to person. *Ἰσίδωρ. ὅπου ἡμεῖς κηρύττομεν, κηρύττοντες ἕνα ἕνα, καὶ διδάσκοντες ἕνα ἕνα ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ σοφίᾳ*, ver. 28. Every man has need to be warned and taught, and therefore let every man have his share. Observe, (1.) When we warn people of what they do amiss, we must teach them to do better: warning and teaching must go together. (2.) Men must be warned and taught in all wisdom. We must choose the fittest season, and use the likeliest means, and accommodate ourselves to the different circumstances and capacities of those we have to do with, and teach them as they are able to bear. And that which he aimed at was to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, *ἵνα ἑκάστους ὑμῶν ἁγιάσωμεν ἑαυτοῖς ὡς ἡμεῖς*. Either perfect in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine; *Let us therefore as many as are perfect be thus minded*, Philip iii. 15. 2 Tim. iii. 17. or else crowned with a glorious reward hereafter, when he will present to himself a glorious church, Eph. v. 27. and bring them to the spirits of just men and perfect, Heb. xii. 23. Observe, That ministers ought to aim at the improvement and salvation of every particular person who hears them. (3.) He was a laborious preacher, and one who took pains: he was no loiterer, and did not do the work of the Lord negligently, ver. 29. *Ἰσίδωρ. ὅπου ἡμεῖς κηρύττομεν, κηρύττοντες ἕνα ἕνα, καὶ διδάσκοντες ἕνα ἕνα ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ σοφίᾳ*. He laboured and strove: used great diligence, and contended with many difficulties, according to the measure of grace afforded to him, and the extraordinary presence of Christ which was with him. Observe, That as Paul laid out himself to do much good; so he had this favour, that the power of God wrought in him the more effectually. The more we labour in the work of the Lord, the greater measure of help we may expect from him in it: Eph. iii. 7. *According to the gift of the grace of God given me, by the effectual working of his power*.

3. The gospel which was preached. We have an account of that. *Ever the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to his saints*, ver. 26, 27. Observe, (1.) That the mystery of the gospel was long hid. It was concealed from ages and generations; the several ages of the church under the Old Testament dispensation. They were in a state of minority, and training up for a more perfect state of things, and could not look to the end of those things which were ordained, 2 Cor. iii. 13. (2.) That this mystery now, in the fulness of time, is made manifest to the saints, or clearly revealed and made apparent. *The veil which was over Moses' face, is done away in Christ*, 2 Cor. iii. 14. The meanest saint under the gospel understands more than the greatest prophets under the law. He who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than they. The mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, Eph. iii. 4, 5. And what is this mystery? It is the riches of God's glory among the Gentiles. The peculiar doctrine of the gospel was a mystery which was before hid, and is now made manifest and made known. But the great mystery here referred to is the breaking down the partition-wall between the Jew and Gentile, and preaching the gospel to the Gentile world, and making them partakers of the privileges of the gospel-state, who before lay in ignorance and idolatry. *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers together of his promise in Christ by the gospel*, Eph. iii. 6. Which is Christ in you the hope of glory, or among you. Which mystery thus made known, observe, Christ is the hope of glory. The ground of our hope is Christ in the word, or the gospel-revelation declaring the nature and methods of obtaining it: The evidence of

of our hope is Christ in the heart, or the sanctification of the soul, and its preparation for the heavenly glory.

4. The duty of those who are interested in this redemption. *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard,* ver. 28. We must continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, i. e. so well fixed in our minds as not to be moved from it by any temptations. We must be steadfast and unmovable, *1 Cor. xv. 58. and hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,* Heb. x. 23. Observe, Then only can we expect the happy end of our faith, when we continue in the faith, and are so far grounded and settled in it, as not to be moved from it. We must not draw back unto perdition, but *believe unto the saving of the soul,* Heb. x. 29. We must be faithful to death, through all trials, that we may receive the crown of life, and receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, *1 Pet. i. 9.*

C H A P. II.

The apostle's concern for the Colossians, ver. 1—4. Repeated again, ver. 5. He cautions them against false teachers among the Jews, ver. 6—8. And against the Gentile philosophy, ver. 9—13. Represents the privileges of Christians, ver. 14—16. And concludes with a caution against the judaizing teachers, and those who would introduce the worship of angels, ver. 17—22.

1. **F**OR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: 2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. 3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We may observe here the great concern which Paul had for those Colossians, and the other churches, which he had not any personal knowledge of. The apostle had never been at Colosse, and the church planted there was not of his planting: and yet he had as tender a care of it, as if it had been the only people of his charge, ver. 1. *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea; and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.* Observe, (1.) Paul's care of the church was such as amounted to a conflict. He was in a sort of agony, and had a constant fear concerning them and what would become of them. Herein he was a follower of his Master, who was in an agony for us, and was heard in that he feared. Observe, (2.) We may keep up a union by faith, hope, and holy love, even with those churches and fellow-Christians, of whom we have no personal knowledge, or any conversation with. We can think and pray, and be concerned for one another, at the greatest distance; and those we never saw in flesh, we may hope to meet in heaven.

But what was it the apostle desired for them? ver. 2. *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, &c.* It was their spiritual welfare he was solicitous about. He doth not say, that they may be healthy and merry, and rich and great, and prosperous; but that their hearts may be comforted. Note, The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity, and what we should be most solicitous about for ourselves and others. We have here a description of soul-prosperity.

1. When our knowledge grows to an understanding of the mystery of God, and of the Father; and of Christ, then the soul prospers when we come to have a more clear, distinct, methodical knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. To understand the mystery, i. e. either what was before concluded, but is now made known concerning the Father and Christ; or, the mystery before-mentioned, of calling the Gentiles into the Christian church, as the Father and Christ have revealed it in the gospel: and not barely to speak of it by rote, or as we have been taught it by our catechisms, but to be led into it, and enter into the meaning and design of it. This is what we should labour after, and then the soul prospers.

2. When our faith grows to a full assurance, and bold acknowledgment of this mystery. (1.) To a full assurance, or a well settled judgment, upon their proper evidence, of the great truths of the gospel; without doubting or calling them in question, but embracing them with the highest satisfaction, as faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. (2.) When it comes to a free acknowledgment; and we not only believe with the heart, but are ready, when called to it, to make confession with our mouth; and are not ashamed of our Master and our holy religion, under the frowns and violence of their enemies. This is called the riches of the full assurance of understanding. Great knowledge and strong faith makes a soul rich. This is being rich toward God, and rich in faith, and the true riches, Luke xii. 21. James i. 5.

3. It consists in the abundance of comfort in our souls. *That their hearts might be comforted.* The soul then prospers when it is filled with joy and peace, Rom. xv. 13. and has a satisfaction within, which all the troubles without cannot disturb; and is able to joy in the Lord, when all other comforts fail, Heb. xiii. 17, 19.

4. The more intimate communion we have with our fellow-Christians, the more the soul prospers: *Being knit together in love.* Holy love knits the hearts of Christians one to another. And faith and love both contribute to our comfort; the stronger our faith is, and the warmer our love, the more will our comfort be.

Having occasion to mention to Christ, ver. 2. according to his usual way, he makes this remark to his honour, ver. 3. *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* He had said, chap. i. 19. *That all fulness dwells in him:* Here he instances particularly in the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. There is a fulness of wisdom in him, as he has perfectly revealed the will of God to mankind. Observe, The treasures of wisdom are hid, not from us, but for us, in Christ. They who would be wise and knowing must apply themselves to Christ. We must spend upon the stock which is laid up for us in him, and draw from the treasures which are hid in him. He is the wisdom of God, and is of God made unto us wisdom, &c. *1 Cor. i. 24—30.*

His concern for them is repeated, ver. 5. *Though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit: joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* Observe, (1.) That we may be present in spirit with those churches and Christians from whom we are absent in body; for the communion of saints is a spiritual thing. Paul had heard concerning the Colossians, that they were orderly and regular; and though he had never seen them, nor was present with them, he tells them he could easily see himself among them, and look with pleasure upon their good behaviour. Observe, (2.) The order and steadfastness of Christians is matter of joy to ministers; they joy when they behold their order, i. e. their regular beha-

viour, and steadfast adherence to the Christian doctrine. Observe, (3.) The more steadfast our faith in Christ is, the better order there will be in our whole conversation; for we live and walk by faith, *2 Cor. v. 7. Heb. x. 38.*

4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. 11. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

The apostle cautions the Colossians against deceivers, ver. 4. *And this I say, lest any man beguile you with enticing words;* and ver. 8. *Lest any man spoil you.* He insists so much upon the perfection of Christ and the gospel-revelation, to preserve them from the ensnaring insinuations of those who would corrupt their principles. Note, (1.) The way in which Satan spoils souls, is by beguiling them. He deceives them, and by it slays them. He is the old serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtlety, *2 Cor. xii. 3.* He could not ruin us if he did not cheat us; and he could not cheat us but by our own fault and folly. (2.) Satan's agents who aim to spoil them, beguile them with enticing words. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the flattery of those who lie in wait to deceive; and by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles and wicked practices. *By good words, and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple,* Rom. xvi. 18. You ought to stand upon your guard against enticing words, and be aware and afraid of those who would entice you to any evil; for that which they aim at is to spoil you. *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not,* Prov. i. 10.

Observe, 1. A sovereign antidote against seducers, ver. 6, 7. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up, &c.* Here note, (1.) All Christians have in profession at least received Jesus Christ the Lord; received him as Christ, the great prophet of the church, anointed by God to reveal his will: as Jesus the great high priest and saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself, and as Lord, or sovereign and king, whom we are to obey and be subject to. Received him, i. e. consented to him, taken him for ours, in every relation and capacity, and for all the purposes and uses of them. (2.) The great concern of those who have received Christ, is to walk in him, i. e. to make their practices conformable to their principles, and their conversations agreeable to their engagements. As we have received Christ, or consented to be his; so we must walk with him in our daily course, and keep up our communion with him. (3.) The more closely we walk with Christ, the more we are rooted and established in the faith. A good conversation is the best establishment of a good faith. If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him, the more closely we shall walk in him; rooted and built up. Observe, We cannot be built up in Christ, unless we are first rooted in him. We must be united to him by a lively faith, and heartily consent to his covenant; and then we shall grow up in him in all things: *As ye have been taught;* according to the rule of the Christian doctrine, in which you have been instructed. Observe, A good education has a good influence upon our establishment. We must be stablished in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein. Observe, That being established in the faith, we must abound therein, and improve in it more and more. And this with thanksgiving. Observe, The way to have the benefit and comfort of God's grace, is to be much in giving thanks for it. We must join thanksgiving to all our improvements, and be sensible of the mercy of all our privileges and attainments.

Observe, 2. The fair warning given us of our danger, ver. 8. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* There is a philosophy which is a noble exercise of our reasonable faculties, and highly serviceable to religion; such a study of the works of God, as leads us to the knowledge of God, and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is vain and deceitful; which is prejudicial to religion, and sets up the wisdom of man in competition with the wisdom of God; and while it pleases men's fancies, ruins their faith; as vice and curious speculations about things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or a care of words and terms of art, which had only an empty, and often a cheating appearance of knowledge. After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world: This plainly reflects upon the Jewish pedagogy or economy, as well as the Pagan learning. The Jews governing themselves by the traditions of their elders, and the rudiments or elements of the world, the rites and observances which were only preparatory and introductory to the gospel-state. And the Gentiles mixed their maxims of philosophy with their Christian principles; and both alienated their minds from Christ. They who pin their faith on other men's sleeves, and walk in the way of the world, are turned away from following after Christ.

The deceivers were especially the Jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in competition with it, and contradiction to it. Now here the apostle shews,

1. That we have in Christ the substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law: for example, (1.) Had they then the Shechinah, or special presence of God, called the glory, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ, ver. 9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the cherubims in a cloud which covered the mercy-seat: But now it dwells in person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature, and is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and has more clearly declared the Father to us. It dwells in him bodily, not as the body is opposed to the spirit, but as the body is opposed to the shadow. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and man. (2.) Had they circumcision which

which was the *seal* of the covenant; in Christ we are *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, ver. 11. i. e. by the work of regeneration, in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision: *He is a Jew who is one inwardly*, and *circumcision is that of the heart*, Rom. ii. 29. And this is owing to Christ, and belongs to the Christian dispensation. *It is made without hands*; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. We are *born of the Spirit*, John iii. 5. And it is the *washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy Spirit*, Tit. iii. 5. It consists in *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*; in renouncing sin, and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. It is not the *putting away the filth of the flesh*, but the *answer of a good conscience towards God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of them: *The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed*, Rom. vi. 6. Christ was circumcised, and by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that *effectual grace* which puts off the *body of the sins of the flesh*. Again, The Jews thought themselves *complete* in the ceremonial law; but we are *complete in Christ*, ver. 10. That was *imperfect and defective*; if the first covenant had been *faultless*, there should no place have been sought for the second, Heb. viii. 7. and the law was but a *shadow of good things*, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto *perfect*, Heb. x. 1. But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete sacrifice of sin and revelation of the will of God; which is the head of all *principality and power*. As the Old Testament priesthood had its perfection in Christ; so likewise had the kingdom of David, which was the eminent principality and power under the Old Testament, and which the Jews valued themselves so much upon. And he is the Lord and head of all the powers in heaven and earth, of angels and men. *Angels, and authorities, and powers are subject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

2. We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking, ver. 12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him*. We are both *buried* and *rise with him*, and both are signified by our baptism; not that there is any thing in the sign or ceremony of baptism, which represents this *burying and rising*, any more than the crucifixion of Christ is represented by any visible resemblance in the Lord's Supper: and he is speaking of the *circumcision made without hands*; and says, it is *through the faith of the operation of God*. But the thing signified by our baptism is, that we are buried with Christ, as baptism is the seal of the covenant, and obligation to our dying to sin; and that we are risen with Christ, as it is a seal and obligation to our *living to righteousness or newness of life*. God in baptism engages to be to us a *God*, and we become engaged to be his people, and by his grace to *die to sin*, and to *live to righteousness*, or put off the old man and put on the new.

13. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14. Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: 15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The apostle here represents the *privileges* we Christians have above the Jews, which are very great.

1. Christ's death is our life, ver. 13. *And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him*. A state of sin is a state of spiritual death: They who are in sin are dead in sin. As the death of the body consists in its separation from the soul, so the death of the soul consists in its separation from God and the divine favour. As the death of the body is the corruption and putrefaction of it, so sin is the corruption or depravation of the soul. As a man who is dead, is unable to help himself by any power of his own; so an habitual sinner is morally impotent; though he has a natural power or the power of a reasonable creature, he has not a spiritual power till he has the divine life or a renewed nature. It is principally to be understood of the Gentile world, who lay in *wickedness*. They were *dead in the uncircumcision of the flesh*, being *aliens to the covenant of promise*, and *without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 11, 12. By reason of their uncircumcision they were dead in their sins: It may be understood of the spiritual uncircumcision or corruption of nature: and so it shews that we are dead in law and dead in state: Dead in law, as a *condemned malefactor* is called a *dead man*, because he is under a sentence of death; so sinners by the guilt of sin are under the sentence of the law and *condemned already*, John iii. 18. And dead in state by reason of the *uncircumcision of our flesh*: An un sanctified heart is called an *uncircumcised heart*: this is our state. Now through Christ we who were dead in sins are *quickened*, i. e. *effectual provision is made for the taking away the guilt of sin*, and breaking the power and dominion of it. *Quickened together with him*, by virtue of our union to him and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls.

2. Through him we have the remission of sin. *Having forgiven you all trespasses*. This is our quickening: The pardon of the crime is the life of the criminal: and this is owing to the resurrection of Christ, as well as his death: for us he *died for our sins*, so he *rose again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 11.

3. Whatever is in force against us is taken out of the way. He has obtained for us a legal discharge from the *hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us*, ver. 14. which may be understood, (1.) Of that obligation to punishment in which consists the guilt of sin. The curse of the law is the *hand-writing* against us, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's wall, *Cursed is every one who continues not in every thing*: This was a hand-writing which was *against us, and contrary to us*; for it threatened our eternal ruin. This was removed when he *redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. He cancelled the obligation for all who repent and believe. Upon me be the curse, my father. He vacated and disannulled the judgment which was against us. When he was *nailed to the cross*, the curse was as it were *nailed to the cross*. And our indwelling corruption is crucified with Christ and by the virtue of his cross. When we remember the *dying of the Lord Jesus*, and see him *nailed to the cross*, we should see the *hand-writing* against us *taken out of the way*. Or rather, (2.) It must be understood of the ceremonial law. The *hand-writing of ordinances*, i. e. the ceremonial institutions, or the law of commandments contained in ordinances, Eph. ii. 15, which was a *yoke* to the Jews, and a *partition-wall* to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus took it out of the way, *nailing it to his cross*, i. e. *disannulled the obligations of it*, that all might see and be satisfied it was no more binding. When the *substance was come*, the shadows flee away. It is *abolished*, 2 Cor. iv. 13. and that which *decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away*, Heb. viii. 13. The expressions are in allusion to the ancient methods of cancelling a bond, either by crossing the writing, or striking it through with a nail.

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4. He has obtained a glorious victory for us over the powers of darkness. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*, ver. 15. As the curse of the law was against us, so the power of Satan was against us. He treated with God as the judge, and redeemed us out of the hands of his justice by a price; but out of the hands of Satan the executioner he redeemed us by power and with a high hand: *He led captivity captive*. The devil and all the powers of hell were conquered and disarmed by the dying Redeemer. The first promise pointed at this; the *bruising the heel* of Christ in his sufferings, was the *breaking the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. The expressions are lofty and magnificent; let us turn aside and see this great fight. The Redeemer conquered by dying: See his crown of thorns turned into a crown of laurels. He *spoiled them*, broke the devil's power, and conquered and disabled him, and *made a shew of them openly*; exposed them to public shame, and made a shew of them to angels and men. Never had the devil's kingdom such a mortal blow given to it as was given by the Lord Jesus. He tied them to his chariot-wheels, and rode forth conquering and to conquer: alluding to the custom of a general's triumph who returned victorious, *triumphing over them in it*, i. e. either in his cross, and by his death, or, as some read it, *in himself*; by his own power; for he *trode the wine-press alone*, and of the people there was none with him.

16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new-moon; or the sabbath-days: 17. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. 18. Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; 19. And not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world; why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21. Touch not, taste not, handle not. 22. (Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

The apostle concludes the chapter with exhortations to proper duty, which he infers from the foregoing discourse.

1. Here is a caution to take heed of Judaizing teachers, or those who would impose upon Christians the yoke of the ceremonial law. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, &c. ver. 16.* Much of the ceremonies of the law of Moses consisted in the distinction of *meats and days*: It appears by Rom. xiv. there were such who were for keeping up those distinctions: But here the apostle shews, that since Christ is come, and hath cancelled the ceremonial law, we ought not to keep it up. Let no man impose those things upon you, for God hath not imposed them; if God hath made you free, be not you again entangled in that *yoke of bondage*. And this the rather, because these things were *shadows of things to come*, ver. 17. intimating, that they had no intrinsic worth in them; and that they are now done away. But the *body is of Christ*: The body of which they were shadows is come; and to continue the ceremonial observances, which were only types and shadows of Christ and the gospel, carries an intimation that Christ is not yet come, and the gospel state not yet commenced. Observe the advantages we have under the gospel, above what they had under the law: They had the shadows, we the substance.

2. He cautions them to take heed of those who would introduce the worship of angels as mediators between God and them, as the Gentile philosophers did. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels*, ver. 18. It looked like a piece of modesty to make use of the mediation of angels, as conscious to ourselves of our unworthiness to speak immediately to God: But though it has a *shew of humility*, it is a voluntary, not a commanded humility; and therefore it is not acceptable, yea, it is not warrantable. He takes that honor which is due to Christ only, and gives it to a creature. Besides, the notions upon which this practice was grounded, were merely the inventions of men, and not by divine revelation; the proud conceits of human reason, which makes men presume to dive into things, and determine them, without sufficient knowledge and warrant; *intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*: Pretending to describe the orders of angels, and their respective ministries, which God hath hid from us; and therefore though there was a shew of humility in the practice, there was a real pride in the principle. They advanced those notions to gratify their own carnal fancy, and were fond to be thought wiser than other people. Pride is at the bottom of a great many errors and corruptions, and even of many evil practices, which have a great shew and appearance of humility. They who do so, do not hold the head, ver. 19. i. e. They did, in effect, disclaim Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man. It is the highest disparagement to Christ, who is the head of the church, for any of the members of it to make use of any intercessors with God, but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at that which is next them, and will stand them in no stead. *From which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*. Observe, (1.) That Jesus Christ is not only a head of government over the church, but a head of vital influence to it. They are knit to him by joints and bands, as the several members of the body are united to the head, and receive life and nourishment from him. Observe, (2.) That the body of Christ is a growing body. *It increaseth with the increase of God*. The new man is increasing, and the nature of grace is to grow where there is not an incidental hindrance. *With the increase of God*; with an increase of grace which is from God as its author; or, in an usual Hebrewism, with a large and abundant increase. *That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God*, Eph. iii. 19. See a parallel expression, *Which is the head even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, maketh increase of the body*, Eph. iv. 15, 16.

He takes occasion from hence to warn them again. *Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world; why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?* ver. 20. If as Christians you are dead to the observances of the ceremonial law, why are you subject to them? Such observance as *touch not, taste not, handle not*, ver. 21, 22. Under the

law there was a ceremonial pollution contracted by touching a dead body, or any thing offered to an idol; or by tasting any forbidden meats, &c. Which are all to perish by the using; having no intrinsic worth in themselves to support them; and they who used them saw them perishing, and passing away: Or, which tends to corrupt the Christian faith, having no other authority than the traditions and injunctions of men. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility. They thought themselves wiser than their neighbours in observing the law of Moses, together with the gospel of Christ, that they might be sure in the one, at least, to be in the right; but alas! it was but a shew of wisdom, a mere invention and pretence. So they seemed to neglect the body, by abstaining from such and such meats, and mortifying their bodily pleasures and appetites: But there is nothing of true devotion in these things, for the gospel teaches us to worship God in spirit and truth, and not by ritual observances; and through the mediation of Christ alone, and not of any angels. Observe, (1.) That Christians are freed by Christ from the ritual observances of Moses's law; and delivered from that yoke of bondage which God himself had laid upon them. (2.) That subjection to ordinances, or human appointments in the worship of God, is highly blameable, and contrary to the freedom and liberty of the gospel. The apostle requires Christians to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, Gal. v. 1. And the imposing them is invading the authority of Christ, the head of the church, and introducing another law of commandments contained in ordinances, when Christ has abolished the old one, Eph. ii. 15. Observe, (3.) That such things have only a shew of wisdom, but are really folly. True wisdom is to keep close to the appointments of the gospel; and an entire subjection to Christ, the only head of the church.

C H A P. III.

The apostle exhorts to set our hearts upon heaven, and take them off from this world, ver. 1—4. He exhorts to the mortification of sin, in the various instances of it, ver. 5—12. And earnestly presses to mutual love and compassion, ver. 12—17. And concludes with exhortations to relative duties; of wives and husbands, parents and children, masters and servants, ver. 18—25.

IF ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The apostle having described our privileges by Christ in the former part of the epistle, and our discharge from the yoke of the ceremonial law; he comes here to press upon us our duty inferred from thence. Though we are made free from the obligation of the ceremonial law; it doth not therefore follow, that we may live as we list. We must walk the more closely with God in all instances of evangelical obedience. He begins with exhorting them to set their hearts on heaven, and take them off from this world: *If ye then be risen with Christ.* It is our privilege that we are risen with Christ, i. e. have benefit by the resurrection of Christ; and by virtue of our union and communion with him are justified and sanctified, and shall be glorified. From hence he infers, That we must seek those things which are above. We must mind the concerns of another world more than the concerns of this. We must make heaven our scope and aim, seek the favour of God above, keep up our communion with the upper world by faith and hope, and holy love; and make it our constant care and business to secure our title to the heavenly bliss. And the reason is, because Christ sits at the right hand of God. He who is our best friend, and our head, is advanced to the highest dignity and honour in heaven; and is gone before, to secure to us the heavenly happiness; and therefore we should seek and secure what he has purchased at so vast expence, and is taking so much care about. We must live such a life as Christ lived here on earth, and lives now in heaven, according to our capacities.

He explains the duty, ver. 2. *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.* Observe, To seek heavenly things is to set our affections upon them, to love them, and let out our desires towards them. Upon the wings of affection the heart soars upward, and is carried forth towards spiritual and divine objects. We must acquaint ourselves with them, and esteem them above all other things; and lay out ourselves in preparation for the enjoyment of them. David gave this proof of his loving the house of God; that he diligently sought after it, and prepared for it, Psal. xxvii. 4. This is to be spiritually minded, Rom. viii. 6. and to seek and desire a better country, that is, an heavenly, Heb. xi. 14—16. Things on earth, are here set in opposition to things above. We must not dote upon them, nor expect too much from them, that we may set our affections on heaven; for heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, and a supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to one, will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other. He assigns three reasons for this, ver. 3, 4.

1. That we are dead; i. e. to present things, and as our portion. We are so in profession and obligation; for we are buried with Christ, and planted into the likeness of his death. Every Christian is crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto him, Gal. vi. 14. And if we are dead to the earth, and have renounced it as our happiness, it is absurd for us to set our affections upon it, and seek it. We should be like a dead thing to it, unmoved and unaffected towards it.

2. Our true life is in the other world; *You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God,* ver. 3. The new man hath its livelihood from thence. It is born and nourished from above: and the perfection of its life is reserved for that state. It is hid with Christ: not hid from us only, in point of secrecy; but hid for us, noting security. The life of a Christian is hid with Christ. *Because I live, ye shall live also,* John xiv. 19. Christ is at present a hidden Christ, or one whom we have not seen; but this is our comfort, that our life is hid with him, and laid up safe with him. As we have reason to love him whom we have not seen, 1 Pet. i. 8. so we may take the comfort of a happiness out of sight, and reserved in heaven for us.

3. Because at the second coming of Christ we hope for the perfection of our happiness. If we live a life of Christian purity and devotion now, when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory, ver. 4. Observe, (1.) Christ is a believer's life. *I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me,* Gal. ii. 20. He is the principle and end of the Christians life. He lives in us by his Spirit, and we live to him in all we do. *To me to live is Christ,* Phil. i. 20. Observe, (2.) That Christ will appear again. He is now hid, and the heavens must contain him: but he will appear in all the

pomp of the upper world, with his holy angels, and his own glory, and his father's glory, Mark viii. 38. Luke ix. 26. Observe, (3.) That we shall then appear with him in glory. It will be his glory to have his redeemed with him; he will come to be glorified in his saints, 2 Thess. i. 10. and it will be their glory to come with him, and be with him for ever. At the second coming of Christ there will be a general meeting of all the saints, and they whose life is now hid with Christ, shall then appear with Christ, in that glory which he himself enjoys, John xvii. 24. Do we look for such a happiness as that, and should we not set our affections upon that world, and live above this? What is there here to make us fond of it? What is there not there, to draw our hearts to it? Our head is there, our home is there, our treasure is there, and we hope to be there for ever.

5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6. For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. 7. In the which ye also walked some time when ye lived in them. 8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9. Lye not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. 11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

The apostle exhorts the Colossians to the mortification of sin, the great hindrance to the seeking the things which are above. Since it is our duty to set our affections upon heavenly things; it is our duty to mortify our members which are upon the earth, and which naturally incline us to the things of the world: mortify them, i. e. subdue the vicious habits of the mind which prevailed in your Gentile state. Kill them, suppress them, as you do weeds or vermin which spread and destroy all about them, or as you kill an enemy which fights against you and wounds you. Your members which are upon the earth; either the members of the body which are the earthly part of us, and were curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth, Psal. cxxxix. 15. Or the corrupt affections of the mind, which lead us to earthly things; the members of the body of death, Rom. vii. 24. He instances in,

1. The lust of the flesh for which they were before so very remarkable: *Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence;* the various workings of the carnal appetite, and fleshly impurities, which they indulged in their former course of life, and which were so contrary to the Christian state, and the heavenly hope.

2. The love of the world: *and covetousness which is idolatry;* i. e. an inordinate love of present good and outward enjoyments, which proceeds from too high a value in the mind, puts upon too eager a pursuit, hinders the proper use and enjoyments, and creates anxious fear and immoderate sorrow for the loss of them. Observe, Covetousness is a spiritual idolatry. It is giving that love and regard to worldly wealth, which is due to God only, and carries a greater degree of malignity in it, and is more highly provoking to God, than is commonly thought. And it is very observable, that among all the other instances of sin which good men are recorded in the scripture to have fallen into; and there is scarce any but some or other, in one or other part of their life have fallen into; there is no instance in all the scripture, of any good man charged with covetousness.

He proceeds to shew how necessary it is to mortify sins, ver. 6, 7.

1. Because if we do not kill them, they will kill us, ver. 6. *For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.* See what we all are by nature more or less: we are children of disobedience: Not only disobedient children, but under the power of sin, and naturally prone to do so. The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies, Psal. lxxviii. 3. And being children of disobedience, we are children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3. The wrath of God comes upon all the children of disobedience. They who do not obey the precepts of the law, incur the penalties of it. The sins he mentions were their sins in their heathen and idolatrous state, and they were then especially the children of disobedience; and yet these sins brought judgments upon them, and exposed them to the wrath of God.

2. We should mortify these sins, because they have lived in us, ver. 7. *In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.* Observe, The consideration that we have formerly lived in sin, is a good argument why we should now forsake it. We have walked in by paths, therefore let us walk in them no more. *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more,* Job xxxiv. 32. *The time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when ye walked in lasciviousness,* 1 Pet. iv. 3. *When ye lived among them who did such things:* So some understand it, then ye walked in those evil practices. It is a hard thing to live among them who do the works of darkness, and not have fellowship with them, as it is to walk in the mire and contract no soil. Let us keep out of the way of evil doers.

And as we are to mortify inordinate desires, so we are to mortify inordinate passions, ver. 8. *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice:* for these are contrary to the design of the gospel, as well as grosser impurities; and though they are more spiritual wickedness, have not less malignity in them. For the gospel religion introduces a change of the higher as well as the lower powers of the soul, and supports the dominion of right reason and conscience over appetite and passion. Anger and wrath are bad, but malice is worse, because it is more rooted and deliberate: It is anger heightened and settled.

And as the corrupt principles in the heart must be cut off, so the product of them in the tongue: As *blasphemy*, which seems here to mean, not so much speaking ill of God, speaking ill of men: giving all language to them, or raising ill reports of them, and injuring their good name by any evil arts and filthy communication. All lewd and wanton discourse, which comes from a polluted mind in the speaker, and propagates the same defilements in the hearers. *Lying; lye not one to another,* ver. 9. For it is contrary both to the law of truth and the law of love; and is both unjust and unkind, and naturally tends to destroy all faith and friendship among mankind. Lying makes us like the devil, who is the father of lies, and is a prime part of the devil's image upon our souls. And therefore we are cautioned against this sin by that general reason: *seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man.* The consideration that we have by profession put away sin, and espoused the cause and interest of Christ, that we have renounced all sin, and stand engaged to Christ, should fortify us against this sin of lying. They who have put off the old man, have put it off with

its deeds; and they who have put on the new man, must put on all its deeds. Not only espouse good principles, but act them in a good conversation. The new man is said to be renewed in knowledge; because an ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. *Without knowledge the heart cannot be good*, Prov. xix. 2. The grace of God works upon the will and affections by renewing the understanding. Light is the first thing in the new creation, as it was in the first: *After the image of him who created him*. It was the honour of man in innocence that he was made after the image of God; but that image was defaced and lost by sin, and is renewed by sanctifying grace. So that a renewed soul is something like what Adam was in the day he was created.

In the privilege and duty of sanctification there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, ver. 11. There is now no difference arising from different country, or different condition and circumstance of life: It is as much the duty of the one as of the other to be holy; and as much the privilege of the one as of the other, to receive from God the grace to be so. Christ came to take down all partition walls, that all might stand on the same level before God, both in duty and privilege. And for this reason, because *Christ is all in all*. Christ is a Christian's all, his only Lord and Saviour, and all his hope and happiness. And to those who are sanctified, one as well as another, and whatever they are in other respects; he is *all in all*, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *beginning and the end*: he is *all in all* things to them.

12. Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; 13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you so also do ye. 14. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

The apostle proceeds to exhort to mutual love and compassion. *Put on therefore bowels of mercy*, ver. 12. We must not only put off anger and wrath, as ver. 8. but we must put on bowels of kindness; not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well: Not only not do hurt to any; but do what good we can to all. The argument here used to enforce the exhortation is very affecting: *Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved*. Observe, (1.) That they who are holy are the elect of God; and they who are the elect of God and holy, are beloved; beloved of God, and ought to be so of all men. (2.) They who are the elect of God, holy and beloved, ought to carry themselves in every thing as becomes them; and so as not to lose the credit of their holiness, nor the comfort of their being chosen and beloved. It becomes those who are holy towards God, to be lowly and loving towards all men. Observe, What we must put on in particular. (1.) *Compassion* towards the miserable; *bowels of mercy*, i. e. the tenderest mercies. They who owe so much to mercy, ought to be merciful to all who are proper objects of mercy. *Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful*, Luke vi. 36. (2.) *Kindness* towards our friends and those who love us: A courteous disposition becomes the elect of God; for the design of the gospel is not only to soften the minds of men, but to sweeten them, and to promote friendship among men, as well as reconciliation with God. (3.) *Humbleness of mind*, in submission to those above us, and condescension to those below us. There must not only be a humble carriage, but a humble mind. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. (4.) *Meekness* towards those who have provoked us, or been any way injurious to us. We must not be transported into any indecency by our resentment of indignities and neglects; but must prudently bridle our own anger, and patiently bear the anger of others. (5.) *Long-suffering* towards those who continue to provoke us. *Charity suffereth long, as well as is kind*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. Many can bear a short provocation, who are weary of bearing when it grows long. But we must suffer long both the injuries of men, and the rebukes of divine providence. If God is long-suffering to us, under all our provocations of him, we should exercise long-suffering to others in like cases. (6.) *Mutual forbearance*, in consideration of the infirmities and deficiencies which we all labour under; *forbearing one another*. We have all of us something which needs to be borne with; and that is a good reason why we should bear with others in what is disagreeable to us. We need the same good turn from others which we are obliged to shew them. (7.) *A readiness to forgive injuries; forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any*. While we are in this world, where there is so much corruption in our hearts, and so much occasion of difference and contention; quarrels will sometimes happen even among the elect of God, who are holy and beloved; and Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention which parted them asunder one from the other, Acts xv. 39. and Paul and Peter, Gal. ii. 14. But it is our duty to forgive one another in such cases; not to bear any grudge, but put up the affront and pass it by. And the reason is, *Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*. The consideration that we are forgiven by Christ for many offences, is a good reason why we should forgive others. It is an argument of the divinity of Christ, that he had power on earth to forgive sins; and it is a branch of his example which we are obliged to follow, if we ourselves would be forgiven. *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*, Matt. vi. 12.

Now, in order to all this, we are exhorted here to several things:

1. To clothe ourselves with love, ver. 14. *Above all things put on charity*: Over all things, *ἐν παντί καὶ πάντοτε*. Let this be the upper garment, the robe, the livery, the mark of our dignity and distinction. Or, let this be principal and chief, as the whole sum and abstract of the second table. *And to faith virtue, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. He lays the foundation in faith, and the top-stone in charity, which is the bond of perfectness, the cement and center of all happy society. Christian unity consists in unanimity and mutual love.

2. To submit ourselves to the government of the peace of God, ver. 15. *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts*, i. e. God's being at peace with you, and the comfortable sense of his acceptance and favour; Or a disposition to peace among yourselves, a peaceable spirit, who keep the peace and make peace. This is called the peace of God; because it is of his working in all who are his. *The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace*, Rom. xiv. 17. Let this peace rule in your heart; prevail and govern there; or umpire and decide all matters of difference among you. *To the which you are called in*

one body. We are called to this peace, to peace with God as our privilege, and peace with our brethren as our duty. Being united in one body, we are called to be at peace one with another, as the members of the natural body; for *we are the body of Christ, and members in particular*, 1 Cor. xii. 27. And to preserve in us this peaceable disposition, we must be thankful: The work of thanksgiving to God is such a sweet and pleasant work, that it will help to make us sweet and pleasant towards all men. Instead of envying one another upon the account of any particular favours and excellence, be thankful for his mercies, which are common to all of you.

3. To let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, ver. 16. The gospel is the word of Christ, which is come to us, but that is not enough, it must dwell in us, or keep house; *ἰσχυρίζομαι*; not as a servant in a family, who is under another's control, but as a master, who has a right to prescribe, and direct to all under his roof. We must take our instructions and directions from it; and our portion of meat and strength, of grace and comfort, in due season, as from the master of the household. It must dwell in us, i. e. be always ready and at hand to us in every thing, and have its due influence and use. We must be familiarly acquainted with it, and know it for our good, Job v. 27. It must dwell in us richly: Not only keep house in our hearts, but keep a good house. Many have the word of Christ dwelling in them, but it dwells in them but poorly; it hath no mighty force and influence upon them. Then the soul prospers, when the word of God dwells in us richly; when we have abundance of it in us, and are full of the scriptures and of the grace of Christ. And this in all wisdom: The proper office of wisdom is to apply what we know to ourselves for our own direction. The word of Christ must dwell in us, not in all notion and speculation to make us doctors, but in all wisdom to make us good Christians, and enable us to carry ourselves in every thing as becomes wisdom's children.

4. To teach and admonish one another. This would contribute very much to our furtherance in all grace; for we sharpen ourselves by quickening others, and improve our knowledge by communicating it for others edification. We must admonish one another in psalms and hymns. Observe, That singing of psalms is a gospel-ordinance; *ψαλμοὶ καὶ ὕμνοι καὶ ᾠδαί*. The psalms of David, and spiritual hymns and odes, collected out of the scripture, and suited to special occasions, instead of their lewd and profane songs in their idolatrous worship. Religious poetry seems countenanced by these expressions, and is capable of great edification. But when we sing psalms, we make no melody, unless we sing with grace in our hearts, i. e. unless we are suitably affected with what we sing, and go along in it with true devotion and understanding. Singing of psalms is a teaching ordinance, as well as a praising ordinance; and we are not only to quicken and encourage ourselves, but to teach and admonish one another, mutually excite our affections, and convey instructions.

5. All must be done in the name of Christ, ver. 17. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*: According to his command, and in compliance with his authority; by strength derived from him; with an eye to his glory; and depending upon his merit for the accepting of what is good, and pardon of what is unwise. *Giving thanks to God and the Father by him*. Observe, (1.) That we must give thanks in all things, in whatsoever we do we must still give thanks, Eph. v. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things*. (2.) That the Lord Jesus must be the mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers. *We give thanks to God, and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Eph. v. 20. They who do all things in Christ's name will never want matter of thanksgiving to God, even the Father.

18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. 20. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. 22. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25. But he that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

The apostle concludes the chapter with exhortations to relative duties as before in the epistle to the Ephesians. The epistles which are most taken up in displaying the glory of the divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jesus, are the most particular and distinct in pressing the duties of the several relations. We must never separate the privileges and duties of the gospel-religion.

1. He begins with the duties of wives and husbands, ver. 18. *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord*. Submission is the duty of wives, *ὑποτάσσεσθαι*. It is the same word which is used to express our duty to magistrates, Rom. xiii. 1. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers*, and expressed by subjection and reverence, Eph. v. 24—33. The reason is, that Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression, 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14. He was first in the creation and last in the transgression. And the head of the woman is the man, and the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man, 1 Cor. xi. 3, 8, 9. It is agreeable to the order of nature and the reason of things, as well as the appointment and will of God. But then it is submission, not to a rigorous lord or absolute tyrant, who may do his will and is without restraints; but to a husband, and to her own husbands; who stands in the nearest relation, and is under strict engagements to proper duty too. And this is fit in the Lord. It is becoming the relation and what they are bound in duty to do as an instance of obedience to the authority and law of Christ.

On the other hand, husbands must love their wives, and not be bitter against them, ver. 19. They must love them with tender and faithful affection, as Christ loved the Church, and as their own bodies; and even as himself, Eph. v. 25, 28, 33. With a love peculiar to the nearest relation and the greatest comfort and blessing of life. And they must not be bitter against them; or use them unkindly with harsh language or severe treatment; but be kind and obliging to them in all things: For the woman was made for the man, neither is the man without the woman, and the man also is by the woman, 1 Cor. xi. 9, 11, 12.

2. The duties of children and parents. *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord*, ver. 20. They must be willing

to do all their lawful commands, and be at their direction and disposal; as those who have a natural right, and are fitter to direct them than themselves. The apostle, *Eph. vi. 2.* requires them to honour as well as obey their parents; they must esteem them and think honourably of them; as the obedience of their lives must proceed from the esteem and opinion of their minds. And this is *well-pleasing to God*, or acceptable to him: for it is the *first commandment with promise*, *Eph. vi. 2.* with an explicit promise annexed to it, *viz. That it shall be well with them, and they shall live long on the earth.* Dutiful children are the most likely to prosper in the world, and enjoy long life.

And parents must be tender as well as children obedient, *ver. 31. Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* Let not your authority over them be exercised with rigour and severity, but with kindness and gentleness; lest you raise your passions and discourage them in their duty, and by holding the reins too strait make them fly out with the greater fierceness. The ill temper and example of imprudent parents is often a great hindrance to their children and a stumbling-block in their way, see *Eph. vi. 4.* And it is by the tenderness of parents and dutifulness of children, that God ordinarily furnishes his church with a seed to serve him, and propagates religion from age to age.

3. Servants and masters. Servants, obey your masters in all things, according to the flesh, *ver. 29.* Servants must do the duty of the relation in which they stand, and obey their masters' commands in all things, which are consistent with their duty to God their heavenly Master. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers: Not only when their master's eye is upon them, but when they are from under the master's eye. They must be both just and diligent. In singleness of heart, fearing God: Without selfish designs, or hypocrisy and disguise, as those who fear God and stand in awe of him. Observe, That the fear of God ruling in the heart will make people good in every relation. Servants who fear God will be just and faithful when they are from under their master's eye, because they know they are under the eye of God; *Gen. xx. 11. Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place.* *Neh. v. 15. But so did not I, because of the fear of God.* And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, *ver. 23. i. e.* with diligence, not idly and slothfully: or, do it cheerfully, not discontented at the providence of God which put you in that relation. As to the Lord, and not as to men. It sanctifies a servant's work when it is done as unto God, *i. e.* with an eye to his glory and in obedience to his command, and not merely as unto men, or with regard to them only. Observe, We are really doing our duty to God when we are faithful in our duty to men. And for servants' encouragement, let them know, that a good and faithful servant is never the further from heaven for his being a servant: *Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of your inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ, ver. 24.* Serving your masters according to the command of Christ, you serve Christ, and he will be your paymasters: You will have a glorious reward at last. Though you are now servants you shall receive the inheritance of sons. But, on the other hand, *He who doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, ver. 25.* There is a righteous God, who, if servants wrong their masters, will reckon with them for it, though they may conceal it from their notice. And he will be sure to punish the unjust as well as reward the faithful servant. And so if masters wrong their servants. And there is no respect of persons with him. The righteous judge of the earth will be impartial and carry it with an equal hand towards master and servant; not swayed by any regard to men's outward circumstances and condition of life. The one and the other will stand upon a level at his tribunal.

It is probable the apostle has a particular respect in all these instances of duty to the case mentioned, *1 Cor. viii.* of relations of a different religion, as a Christian and heathen, a Jewish convert and an uncircumcised Gentile; where there was room to doubt whether they were obliged to the proper duties of their several relations to such persons. And if it hold in such cases, it is much stronger upon Christians one towards another, and where both are of the same religion. And how happy would the gospel-religion make the world if it every where prevailed; and how much would it influence every state of things and every relation of life!

CHAP. IV.

He continues his account of the duty of masters, from the close of the former chapter, *ver. 1, 2.* Exhorts to the duty of prayer, *ver. 3, 4.* And to a prudent and decent carriage towards those with whom we converse, *ver. 5, 6.* Closes the epistle with the mention of several of his friends, of whom he gives an honourable testimony, *ver. 7—18.*

I. MASTERS, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

The apostle proceeds with the duty of masters to their servants, which might have been joined in the foregoing chapter, and is a part of that discourse. Here observe,

1. That justice is required of them: Give unto your servants that which is just and equal, *ver. 1.* Not only strict justice but equity and kindness. Be faithful to your promises to them, and perform your agreements; not defrauding them of their dues, or keeping back by fraud the hire of the labourers, *James v. 4.* Require no more of them than they are able to perform; and do not lay unreasonable burdens upon them, and beyond their strength: Provide for them what is fit, and take care of proper food and physic; and allow them such liberties as may enable them the better for cheerful service, and make it the easier to them. And this, though they are employed in the meanest and lowest offices, and are of another country and a different religion from yourselves.

2. A good reason for this regard: *Knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* You who are masters of others, have a master yourself, and are servants of another lord. You are not lords of yourselves, and are accountable to one above you. Do you deal with your servants as you expect God should deal with you; and as those who believe you must give an account. You are both servants of the same Lord in the different relations in which you stand, and are equally accountable to him at last. *Knowing that your master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him, Eph. vi. 9.*

3. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving: 3. Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

If this is considered as connected with the foregoing verse, then we may observe, that it is part of the duty which masters owe their servants, to pray

with them and to pray daily for them, or continue in prayer. They must not only do justly and kindly by them, but act a Christian and religious part, and be concerned for their souls as well as their bodies; as parts of your charge and under your influence. Be concerned for the blessing of God upon them, as well as the success of your affairs in their hands. And this is the duty of every one: to continue in prayer: Keep up your constant times of prayer without being diverted from it by other business; keep your hearts close to the duty without wandering or deadness; and even to the end of it. *Watching in the same.* Christians should lay hold on all opportunities for prayer, and choose the fittest seasons, which are least liable to disturbance from other things, and keep their minds lively in the duty, and in suitable frames. With thanksgiving, or solemn acknowledgment of the mercies received. Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer.

Withal praying also for us: *ver. 3.* The people must pray particularly for their ministers, and bear them upon their hearts at all times at the throne of grace, *q. d.* Do not forget us whenever you pray for yourselves, *Eph. vi. 19. 1 Thess. v. 25. Heb. xiii. 18. That God would open to us a door of utterance, i. e.* either afford an opportunity to preach the gospel; so he says, *a great door, and effectual is opened to me, 1 Cor. xvi. 9.* Or else give me ability and courage, and enable me with freedom and faithfulness, so *Eph. vi. 19. And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to speak the mystery of Christ for which I am also in bonds, i. e.* either the deepest doctrines of the gospel with plainness; of which Christ is the principal subject; he calls it, the *mystery of the gospel*, *Eph. vi. 19.* Or else he means the preaching of the gospel to the Gentile world, which he calls the *mystery hid from ages*, *chap. i. 26.* and the *mystery of Christ*, *Eph. iii. 4.* For this he was now in bonds: He was a prisoner at Rome by the violent opposition of the malicious Jews. He would have them pray for him, that he might not be discouraged in his work, or driven from it by his sufferings. *That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak, ver. 4.* That I may make this mystery known to those who have not heard of it; and make it plain to their understanding, in such a manner as I ought to do. He had been particular in telling them what he prayed for them, *chap. i.* Here he tells them particularly what he would have them pray for him. Paul knew as well as any man how to speak, and yet he begs their prayers for him that he might be taught to speak. The best and most eminent Christians need the prayers of meaner Christians, and are not above asking them. The chief speakers need prayer, that God would give them a door of utterance, and that they may speak as they ought to speak.

5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech be a way with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

The apostle exhorts them further to a prudent and decent carriage toward all those with whom they converse. Towards the heathen world, or those out of the Christian church among whom they lived, *ver. 5. Walk in wisdom towards them who are without:* Be careful in all you converse with them to get no hurt by them, or contract any of their customs: for *evil communications corrupt good manners:* and to do no hurt to them, or increase their prejudices against religion, and give them an occasion of dislike. Yea, do them all the good you can, and by all the fittest means, and in the proper seasons recommend religion to them. *Redeeming the time, i. e.* either improving every opportunity of doing them good, and making the best use of our time in proper duty; diligence in redeeming time does very much recommend religion to the good opinion of others: Or else walking cautiously and with circumspection, to give them no advantage against you, or expose yourselves to their malice and ill-will, *Eph. v. 15, 16. Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil, i. e.* dangerous, or times of trouble and suffering.

And towards others, or those who are within as well as those who are without. Let your speech be always with grace, *ver. 6.* Let all your discourse be as becomes Christians, and with a deference to your profession: savoury, discreet, seasonable. Though it be not always of grace, it must be always with grace; and though the matter of our discourse be that which is common, yet there must be an air of piety upon it, and it must be in a Christian manner, seasoned with salt. Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, and makes it savoury and keeps it from corrupting. *That you may know how you ought to answer every man.* One answer is proper for one man and another for another man, *Prov. xxvi. 4, 5.* We have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man: particularly in answering the questions and objections of adversaries against our religion; giving the reasons of our faith, and shewing the unreasonableness of their exceptions and cavils, to the best advantage to our cause, and least prejudice to ourselves. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man, who asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, 1 Pet. iii. 15.*

7. All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellow-servant in the Lord: 8. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts: 9. With Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. 10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus sifter's son to Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him. 11. And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. 12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. 14. Luke the beloved physician, and Demas greet you: 15. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 16. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise

wife read the epistle from Laodicea. 17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfil it. 18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

In the close of this epistle the apostle does several of his friends the honour to leave their names upon record, with some testimony of his respect, which will be spoken of wherever the gospel comes, and last to the end of the world.

1. Concerning Tychicus, ver. 7. By him this epistle was sent, and he does not give them an account in writing of his present state, because Tychicus would do it by word of mouth more fully and particularly. He knew they would be glad to hear how it fared with him. The churches cannot but be concerned for good ministers and desirous to know their state. He gives him this character, *A beloved brother and faithful minister*. Paul, though a great apostle, owns a faithful minister for a brother and a beloved brother. Faithfulness in any one is truly lovely, and renders him worthy our affection and esteem. *And a fellow-servant in the Lord*. Ministers are servants to Christ, and fellow-servants to one another. They have one Lord, though they have different stations and capacities of service. Observe, It adds much to the beauty and strength of the gospel-ministry, when ministers are thus loving and condescending to one another; and by all just means support and advance one another's reputation. Paul sent him not only to tell them of his affairs, but to bring him an account of theirs: *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts*, ver. 8. He was as willing to hear from them as they could be to hear from him; and thought himself as much obliged to sympathise with them, as he thought them obliged to sympathise with him. It is a great comfort under the troubles and difficulties of life to have the mutual concern of fellow-Christians.

2. Concerning Onesimus, ver. 9. *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*. He was sent back from Rome along with Tychicus. This was he whom Paul had begotten in his bonds, Philemon 10. and had been servant to Philemon, and who was a member if not a minister of their church. He was converted at Rome, whither he had fled from his master's service, and is now sent back, it is probable, with the epistle to Philemon to introduce him again into his master's family. Observe, Though he was a poor servant, and had been an ill man, yet being now a convert, Paul calls him a *faithful and beloved brother*. The meanest circumstance of life and greatest wickedness of former life, makes no difference in the spiritual relation among sincere Christians. They partake of the same privileges, and are entitled to the same regards. *The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference*, Rom. iii. 22, and *there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*, Gal. iii. 28. Perhaps this was some time after he was converted, and sent back to Philemon; and that by this time he was entered into the ministry, because Paul calls him a brother.

3. *Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner*. They who join in services and sufferings, should be thereby engaged to one another in holy love, and endeared to one another. Paul had a particular affection for his fellow-servants and his fellow-prisoners.

4. *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas*. This is supposed to be the same who wrote the gospel which bears his name. *If he come unto you, receive him*. Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas upon the account of this Mark, who was his nephew, and thought not good to take him with them, because he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work, Acts xv. 38. He would not take Mark with him, but took Silas, because Mark had deserted them; and yet Paul is not only reconciled to him himself, but recommends him to the respects of the churches, and gives a great example of a truly Christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not be always remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness*, Gal. vi. 1.

5. Here is one who is called Jesus, which is a Greek name for the Hebrew Joshua: *If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day*, Heb. iv. 8. *Who is called Justus*. It is likely he changed it for the name of Justus, in honour to the name of the Redeemer: Or else Jesus was his Jewish name, for he was of the circumcision; and Justus his Roman or Latin name. *These are my fellow-labourers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me*. Observe, What comfort the apostle had in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, i. e. who are working-out their own salvation, and endeavouring to promote the salvation of others. Good ministers take great comfort in those who are their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Their friendship and converse together is a great refreshment under the sufferings and difficulties in their way.

6. *Epaphras*, ver. 12. the same with Epaphroditus. He is one of you; one of your church, he saluteth you, or sends his service to you, and his best affections and wishes. *Always labouring fervently for you in prayers*. Epaphras had learned of Paul to be much in prayer for his friends. Observe,

(1.) In what manner he prayed for them. He laboured in prayer; and laboured fervently; and always laboured fervently for them. They who would succeed in prayer must take pains in prayer; and we must be earnest in prayer, not only for ourselves, but for others also. It is the *effectual fervent prayer* which is the prevailing prayer, and availeth much, James v. 16. and *Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain*, ver. 17.

(2.) What is the matter of this prayer; *That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*. Observe, To stand perfect and complete in the will of God, is what we should earnestly desire both for ourselves and others: We must stand complete in all the will of God; in the will of his precepts, by an universal obedience; and in the will of his providence, by a cheerful submission to it; And we stand perfect and complete in both by constancy and perseverance unto the end.

The apostle was witness for Epaphras, that *he had a great zeal for them; I hear him record*: I can testify for him that he has a great concern for you, and that all he does for you proceeds from a warm desire for your good. And his zeal attended to all about them; to *them who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis*: He had a great concern for the Christian interest in the neighbouring places, as well as among them.

7. *Luke* is another here mentioned, whom he calls *the beloved physician*. This is he who wrote the Gospel and Acts, and was Paul's companion. Observe, He was both a physician and an evangelist. Christ himself both taught and healed, and was a great physician as well as prophet of the church. He was the beloved physician; one who recommended himself more than ordinary to the affections of his friends. Skill in physic is a useful accomplishment in a minister, and may be improved to more extensive usefulness and greater esteem among Christians.

8. *Demas*. Whether this was written before the second epistle to Timothy, or after, is not certain: There we read, 2 Tim. iv. 11. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*. Some have thought that this epistle was written after, and then it is an evidence, that though Demas forsook Paul, yet he did not forsake Christ; or he forsook him but for a time, and recovered himself again, and Paul forgave him, and owned him as a brother. But others think more probably, that this epistle was writ before the other; this in anno 62. that 66. and then it is an evidence how considerable a man Demas was, who yet afterward revolted. Many who have made a great figure in profession, and gained a great name among Christians, have yet shamefully apostatized. *They went out from us, because they were not of us*, 1 John ii. 19.

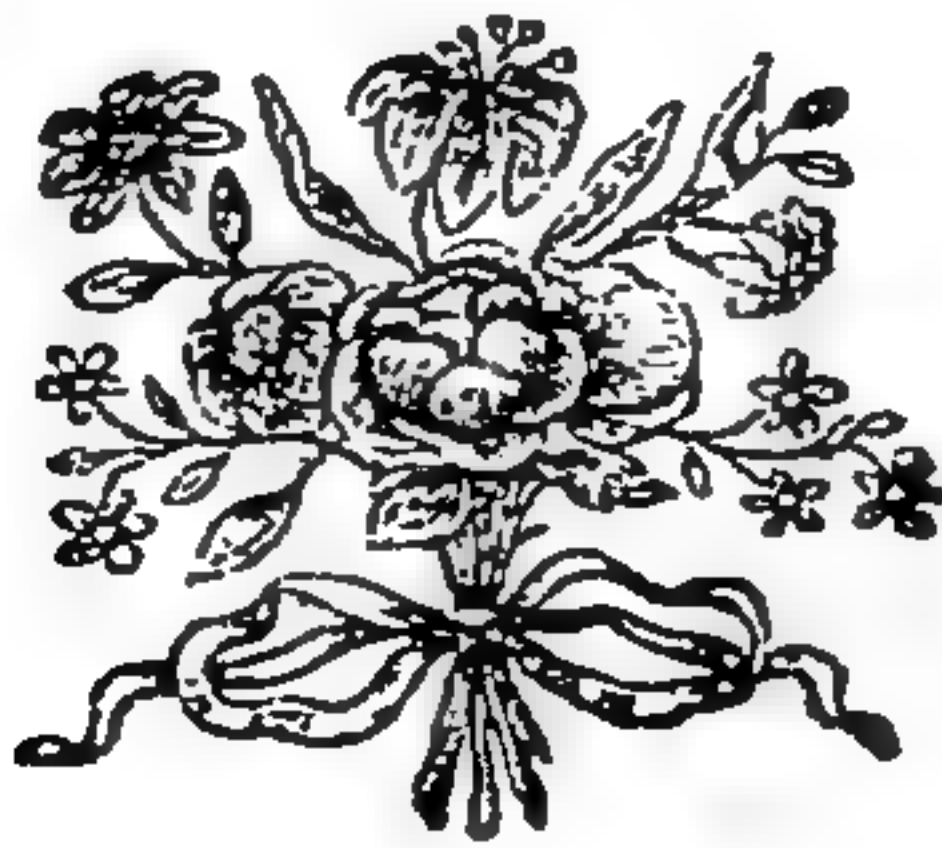
9. The brethren in Laodicea are here mentioned, as living in the neighbourhood of Colosse; and Paul sends salutations to them, and orders that *this Epistle should be read in the church of the Laodiceans*, ver. 16. That a copy of it should be sent there to be read publicly in their congregation. And some think Paul sent another epistle at this time to Laodicea, and ordered to send for that from Laodicea, and read it in their church: *And that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea*. If so, that epistle is now lost, and did not belong to the canon; for all the epistles which the apostles ever wrote were not preserved, any more than all the words and actions of our blessed Lord: *There are many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books which should be written*, John xxi. 25. But some think it was the epistle to the Ephesians, which is still extant.

10. *Nymphas* is mentioned, ver. 15. as one who lived at Colosse, and had a church at his house, i. e. either a religious family where the several parts of worship were daily performed; or some part of the congregation met there, when they had no public places of worship allowed, and they were forced to assemble in private houses for fear of their enemies. *The disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews*, John xx. 19. and the apostle preached in his own lodging and hired house, Acts xxviii. 23, 30. In the former sense, it shewed his exemplary piety; in the latter his zeal and public spirit.

11. Concerning Archippus, who was one of their ministers at Colosse: They are bid to admonish him, to mind his work as a minister, to take heed to it, and to fulfil it; to be diligent and careful of all the parts of it, and to persevere in it unto the end. They must attend to the main design of their ministry, without troubling themselves or the people with things foreign to it, or of less moment. Observe, (1.) That the ministry we have received is a great honour: for it is *received in the Lord*, and is by his appointment and command. (2.) That they who have received it must fulfil it, or do the full duty of it. They betray their trust, and will have a sad account at last, who do *this work of the Lord negligently*. (3.) That their people may put their ministers in mind of their duty, and excite them to it. *Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry*; though no doubt with decency and respect, not from pride and conceit.

12. Concerning Paul himself, ver. 18. *The salutation of me Paul: Remember my bonds*. He had a scribe to write all the rest of the epistle, but these words he wrote with his own hand: *Remember my bonds*: He doth not say remember I am a prisoner, and send me supply; but remember I am in bonds as the apostle of the Gentiles, and let that confirm your faith in the gospel of Christ: it adds weight to his exhortation; *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy*, Eph. iv. 1. *Grace be with you*. The free favour of God, and all good, the blessed fruits and effects of it, be with you, and your portion.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
 WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
 OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF
St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

THESSALONICA was formerly the metropolis of Macedonia; it is now called Solonichi, and is the best peopled, and one of the best towns for commerce in the Levant. The apostle Paul being diverted from his design of going into the provinces of Asia, properly so called, and directed after an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel in Macedonia, *Acts xvi. 9, 10.* in obedience to the call of God went from Tarsus to Samothracia, and from thence to Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi, where he had good success in his ministry; but met with hard usage, being cast into prison with Silas his companion in travel and labour; from whence being wonderfully delivered, they comforted the brethren there and departed. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where the apostle planted a church that consisted of some believing Jews, and many converted Gentiles, *Acts xvii. 1—4.* But a tumult being raised in the city by the unbelieving Jews, and the lewd and baser sort of the inhabitants; Paul and Silas, for their safety, were sent away by night unto Berea: and afterwards Paul was conducted to Athens, leaving Silas and Timotheus behind him, but sent directions that they should come to him with all speed.

When they were come, Timotheus was sent to Thessalonica to enquire after their welfare, and to establish them in the faith, *1 Thess. iii. 2.* who returned to Paul while he tarried at Athens, and was sent again together with Silas to visit the churches in Macedonia. So that Paul being left at Athens alone, *1 Thess. iii. 2.* departed from thence to Corinth, where he continued a year and a half; in which time Silas and Timotheus returned to him from Macedonia, *Acts xviii. 5.* and then he wrote this epistle to the church of Christ at Thessalonica; which, though it is placed after the other epistles of this apostle, is supposed to be *first* in time of all Paul's epistles, and to be written about *A. D. 15.*

The main scope whereof is to express the thankfulness of this apostle for the good success his preaching had among them, and to establish them in the faith, and persuade them to a holy conversation.

C H A P. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1. the apostle begins with a thanksgiving to God for the saving benefits bestowed on them, ver. 2—5. And then mentions the sure evidences of the good success of the gospel among them, which was notorious and famous in several other places, ver. 6—12.

1. PAUL, and Silvanus, and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God, the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this introduction we have,

1. The inscription; where we have,

(1.) The persons from whom this epistle came, or by whom it was written: Paul was the inspired apostle and writer of this epistle, though he maketh no mention of his apostleship, which was not doubted of by the Thessalonians, nor opposed by any false apostles among them. He joins Silvanus [or Silas] and Timotheus with himself (who were now come to him with an account of the prosperity of the churches of Macedonia) which sheweth this great apostle's humility, and how desirous he was to put honour upon the ministers of Christ that were of an inferior rank and standing; a good example this to such ministers as are of greater abilities and reputation in the church than some others.

(2.) The persons to whom this epistle is written, namely, the church of the Thessalonians, i. e. the converted Jews and Gentiles in Thessalonica; and it is observable that this church is said to be in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: They had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, *1 John i. 3.* Therefore they were a Christian Church, because they believed in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. They believed the principles both of natural and revealed religion. The Gentiles among them were turned to God from idols, and the Jews among them believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah. All of them were devoted and dedicated to God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. To God as their chiefest good and highest end: To Jesus Christ as their lord and mediator between God and man. God the Father is the original and center of all natural religion; and Jesus Christ is the author and center of all revealed religion. *Ye believe in God, saith our Saviour, believe also in me, John xiv. 1.*

2. The salutation or apostolical benediction. *Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the same for substance as in the other epistles. Grace and peace are well joined together; for the free grace and favour of God is the spring and fountain of all that peace and prosperity we do or can enjoy; and where there are gracious dispositions in us, we may hope for peaceful thoughts in our own breasts: both grace and peace, and all spiritual blessings, do come to us from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; from God the original of all good, and from the Lord Jesus the purchaser of all good for us. From God in Christ, and so our Father in covenant, because he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note, as all good cometh from God, so no good can be hoped for by sinners but from God in Christ. And the best good may be expected from God as our Father for the sake of Christ.

2. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. 3. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father: 4. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 5. For our gospel came not unto you in name only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

(1.) The apostle begins with thanksgiving unto God. Being about to mention the things that were matter of joy to him, and highly praise-worthy in them, and greatly for their advantage, he chooseth to do this by way of thanksgiving to God, who is the author of all that good that cometh to us or is done by us at any time. God is the object of all religious worship, of prayer and praise. And thanksgiving to God is a great duty, to be performed always or constantly; even when we do not actually give thanks to God by our words, we should have a grateful sense of God's goodness upon our minds. Thanksgiving should be often repeated; and not only should we be thankful for the favours we ourselves do receive, but for benefits bestowed on others also; upon our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians. The apostle gave thanks not only for those that were his most intimate friends, or most eminently favoured of God, but for them all.

(2.) He joined prayer with his praise or thanksgiving: When we do in every thing by prayer and supplication make our requests known to God, we should join thanksgiving therewith, *Phil. iv. 6.* So when we give thanks for any benefit we receive, we should join prayer. We should pray always and without ceasing, and should pray not only for ourselves but for others also; for our friends, and should make mention of them in our prayers. We may sometimes mention their names and should make mention of their case and condition; at least we should have their persons and circumstances in our minds; remembering them without ceasing.

Note, As there is much that we ought to be thankful for on the behalf of ourselves and our friends, so there is much occasion of constant prayer for further supplies of good.

(3.) He mentions the particulars for which he was so thankful to God; namely,

First, the saving benefits bestowed on them. These were the grounds and reasons of his thanksgiving, e. g.

(1.) Their faith, and their work of faith. This he tells them, ver. 8. was very famous and spread abroad. This is the radical grace and their faith was a true and living faith, because a working faith. Note, Wherever there is a true faith, it will work. It will have an influence upon heart and life; it will put us upon working for God and for our own salvation. Then we have comfort in our own faith and the faith of others, when we perceive the work of faith. *Show me thy faith by thy works.* James ii. 18.

(2.) Their love and the labour of love. Love is one of the cardinal graces, and of great use to us in this life, and will remain and be perfected in the life to come. *Faith works by love.* It shews itself in the exercise of love to God, and love to our neighbour. As love will shew itself by labour, it will put us upon taking pains in religion.

(3.) Their hope and the patience of hope. *We are saved by hope.* This grace is compared to the soldier's helmet and sailor's anchor, and is of great use in times of danger. And wherever there is a well-grounded hope of eternal life, that will appear by the exercise of patience; in a patient bearing the calamities of the present time, and a patient waiting for the glory to be revealed: *For if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it,* Rom. viii. 25.

(4.) The apostle not only mentions these three cardinal graces, faith, hope, and love, but also taketh notice,

1. Of the object and efficient cause of these graces, viz. our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Of the sincerity of them, being in the sight of God even the Father. The great motive to sincerity is the apprehension of God's eye as always upon us; and it is a sign of sincerity, when in all we do we endeavour to approve ourselves to God; and that is right which is so in the sight of God. Then is the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope sincere, when it is done under the eye of God.

3. He mentions the fountain from whence these graces did flow, viz. God's electing love. *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God,* ver. 4. Thus he runs up these streams to the fountain, and that was God's eternal election. Some by their election of God would understand only the temporary separation of the Thessalonians from the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in their conversation; but this was according to the eternal purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11. And speaking of their election, he calls them, *brethren beloved*: for the original of the brotherhood that is between Christians, and the relation wherein they stand one to another, is election. And that is a good reason why

why we should *love one another*, because we are *loved of God*, and were loved of him in his councils when there was not any thing in us to merit his love. The election of these Thessalonians was *known to the apostle*, and therefore might be *known to themselves*, and that by the fruits and effects thereof, viz. their sincere faith, and hope, and love; by the successful preaching of the gospel among them.

Observe, 1. That all those who in the fulness of time are effectually called and sanctified, were from eternity elected and chosen to salvation.

2. That the election of God is of his own good pleasure and mere grace, not for the sake of any merit in them that are chosen.

3. That the election of God may be known by the fruits thereof.

4. That whenever we are giving thanks to God for his grace either to ourselves or others, we should run up the streams to the fountain, and give thanks to God for his electing love by which we are made to differ.

Secondly, Another ground or reason of the apostle's thanksgiving, is the *success of his ministry* among them. He was thankful on his own account as well as theirs, that he had not *laboured in vain*. He had the seal and evidence of his apostleship hereby, and great encouragement in his labours and sufferings. Their ready acceptance and entertainment of the gospel he preached to them, was an evidence of their being elected and beloved of God. It was by this way he knew their election. It is true he had been in the *third heavens*, but had not searched the records of eternity and found their election there; but knew this by the success of the gospel among them, *ver. 5.* and he taketh notice with thankfulness.

(1.) That the gospel came to them also not in *word only* but in *power*, i. e. they did not only hear the *sound* of it, but submitted to the *power* of it. It did not only tickle the ear and please the fancy; not only fill their heads with notions and amuse their minds for a while, but did affect their hearts: a divine power went along with it for the convincing their consciences and amending their lives. Note, That by this we may know our election, if we not only speak of the things of God by rote as parrots, but feel the influence of those things in our hearts, mortifying our lusts, and weaning us from the world, and raising us up to heavenly things.

(2.) It came in the *Holy Ghost*, i. e. with the powerful energy of the divine Spirit. Note, Wherever the gospel comes in power, it is to be attributed to the operation of the Holy Ghost; and unless the Spirit of God accompanies the word of God to render it effectual by his power, it will be to us but as a *dead letter*; and the *letter killeth, the Spirit giveth life*.

(3.) The gospel came to them in *much assurance*. Thus did they entertain it by the power of the Holy Ghost: They were fully convinced of the truth of it, so as not to be easily shaken in mind by objections and doubts; they were willing to leave all for Christ and to venture their souls and everlasting condition upon the verity of the gospel-revelation: The word not to them like the sentiments of some philosophers, about matters of opinion and doubtful speculation, but the object of their faith and assurance. Their *faith was the evidence of things not seen*; and the Thessalonians did thus *know what manner of men* the apostle and his fellow-labourers *were among them*, and what they did for their sake, and with what good success.

6. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost: 7. So that ye were ensamples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia. 8. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak any thing. 9. For they themselves shew of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; 10. And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even Jesus*, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

In these words we have the evidence of the apostle's success among the Thessalonians, which was notorious and famous in several places. For,

(1.) They were careful in their holy conversation to imitate the good examples of the apostles and ministers of Christ, *ver. 6.* As the apostle took care to demean himself well, not only for his *own credit's* sake, but for the *benefit of others*, by a conversation suitable to his doctrine, that he might not pull down with one hand what he buildeth up with the other; so the Thessalonians, who observed what manner of men they were among them, how their preaching and living was all of a piece, shewed a conscientious care to be *followers of them*, i. e. to imitate their good example: And herein they became also followers of the *Lord*, who is the perfect example we must strive to imitate, and we should be followers of others no farther than they are followers of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1. and the Thessalonians acted thus notwithstanding their afflictions, that much affliction the apostles and themselves also were exposed to. They were willing to share in the sufferings that attended the embracing and professing Christianity. They entertained the gospel, notwithstanding the troubles and hardships which attended the preachers and professors of it too. Perhaps this made the word more precious, being dear bought; and the examples of the apostles shined very bright under their afflictions; so that the Thessalonians embraced the word cheerfully, and followed the example of the suffering apostles joyfully, *with joy in the Holy Ghost*: such solid and spiritual and lasting joy as the Holy Ghost is the author of, who, when our afflictions do abound, maketh our consolations much more to abound.

(2.) Their zeal prevailed to that degree, that they were themselves examples to all about them, *ver. 7, 8.*

Observe here,

1. Their example was very *effectual* to make good impressions upon many others. They were *total stamps* or instruments to make impression with. They had themselves received good impressions from the preaching and conversation of the apostles, and they make good impressions, and their conversation had an influence upon others. Note, Christians should be so good as by their example to influence others.

2. It was very *extensive*, and reached beyond the confines of Thessalonica, even to the believers of all Macedonia and further in Achaia. The Philippian and others that received the gospel before the Thessalonians were edified by their example. Note, Some that were last hired into the vineyard, may sometimes outstrip those that come in before them and become examples to them.

3. It was very *famous*. The word of the Lord, or its wonderful effects upon the Thessalonians, sounded, or was famous and well known in the regions round about that city, and in *every place*; not *strictly every where*, but here and there, up and down in the world: So that from the good success of the gospel among them, many others were encouraged to en-

tertain it, and to be willing when called on to suffer for it. Their faith was *spread abroad*.

(1.) The *readiness* of their faith was famed abroad. These Thessalonians embraced the gospel as soon as it was preached to them; so that every body took notice what manner of entering in among them the apostles had: That there were no such delays as at Philippi, where it was a great while before much good was done.

(2.) The *effects* of their faith were famous. 1. They quitted their idolatry, they turned from their idols and abandoned all that false worship they had been educated in. 2. They gave themselves up to God, to the living and true God, and devoted themselves to his service. 3. They set themselves to wait for the Son of God from heaven, *ver. 10.* And this is one of the peculiarities of our holy religion, to wait for Christ's second coming, as those that *believe* he will come, and *hope* he will come to our joy. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming; he is yet to come. And there is good reason to *believe* he will come, because God hath *raised him from the dead*, which is a full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment, *Acts xvii. 31.* And there is good reason to *hope* and *wait* for his coming, because he hath *delivered us from the wrath to come*. He came to *purchase* salvation, and will when he cometh again *bring* salvation with him, full and final deliverance from sin and death and hell; from *that wrath which is yet to come* upon unbelievers; and which, when it is once come, will be *yet to come*, because it is *everlasting fire* prepared for the devil and his angels, *Matt. xxv. 46.*

C H A P. II.

In this chapter the apostle puts the Thessalonians in mind of the manner of his preaching among them, *ver. 1—6.* Then of the manner of his conversation among them, *ver. 7—12.* Afterwards of the success of his ministry, with the effects both on himself and themselves, *ver. 13—16.* And then apologizeth for his absence, *ver. 17—20.*

1. **F**OR yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. 2. But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully intreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. 3. For our exhortation was not deceit, nor of uncleanness, not in guile: 4. But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. 5. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness: God is witness. 6. Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Here we have an account of Paul's manner of preaching, and his comfortable reflexion upon his entrance in among the Thessalonians: And as he had the testimony of his own conscience witnessing to his integrity, so he could appeal to the Thessalonians how faithfully he, and Silas and Timotheus, his helpers in the work of the Lord, had discharged their office. *You yourselves, brethren, knowing our entrance in unto you.* Note, It is a great comfort to a minister to have his own conscience and the consciences of others witnessing for him, that he *set out well* with good designs, and from good principles; and that his *preaching was not in vain*, or as some read it, *was not vain*. The apostle here comforts himself either in the *success* of his ministry, that it was not fruitless or in vain, (according to our translation,) or as others think, reflecting upon the *sincerity* of his preaching, that it was not *vain*, and empty or deceitful and treacherous. The subject matter of the apostle's preaching was not *vain* and *idle* speculations, about useless niceties and foolish questions, but sound and solid truth, such as was most likely to profit his hearers. A good example, this is to be imitated by all the ministers of the gospel. Much less was the apostle's preaching *vain* or *deceitful*. He could say to these Thessalonians what he told the Corinthians, 2 Cor. iv. 2. *He had renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.* He had no sinister or worldly design in his preaching, which he puts them in mind to have been.

(1.) With *courage and resolution*. *We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God*, *ver. 2.* The apostle was inspired with an holy boldness, nor was he discouraged at the afflictions he met with or the opposition that was made against him: He had met with ill usage at Philippi as these Thessalonians well knew; there it was that he and Silas were shamefully entreated, being put in the stocks; yet no sooner were they set at liberty but they went to Thessalonica and preached the gospel with as much boldness as ever. Note, Suffering in a good cause should rather sharpen than blunt the edge of holy resolution. The gospel of Christ at its first setting out in the world met with much opposition; and they that preached it *with contention*, with great agony: Which denoted either the apostles striving in their preaching, or their striving against the opposition they met with. This was Paul's comfort, he was neither daunted in his work nor driven from it.

(2.) With great *simplicity* and *godly sincerity*. *Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile*, *ver. 3.* This no doubt was matter of the greatest comfort to the apostle, the consciousness of his own sincerity; and was one reason of his success. It was the sincere and uncorrupted gospel that he preached and exhorted them to believe and obey. His design was not to set up a faction to draw men over to a party, but to promote *pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father*. The gospel he preached was without *deceit*, it was true and faithful; it was not fallacious nor a cunningly devised fable. Nor was it of *uncleanness*: His gospel was pure and holy, worthy of its holy author, tending to discountenance all manner of impurity. *The word of God is pure*. There would be no corrupt mixtures therewith; and as the *matter* of the apostle's exhortation was thus true and pure, the *manner* of his speaking was *without guile*. He did not *pretend* one thing and *intend* another. *He believed, and therefore he spake*. He had no sinister and secular aims and views, but was in reality what he seemed to be. The apostle not only asserts his sincerity but subjoineth the reasons and evidences thereof. The reasons are contained, *ver. 4.* viz.

(2.) They were *stewards*: Put in trust with the gospel, and it is required of a steward that he be faithful. The gospel which Paul preached was not his *own* but the gospel of God. Note, Ministers have a great *favour* shewn them, and *honour* put upon them, and *trust* committed to them. They must

not dare to corrupt the word of God: They must diligently make use of what is intrusted with them, so as God hath allowed and commanded, knowing they shall be called to an account when they must be no longer stewards.

2. Their design was to please God and not men. God is a God of truth, and requireth truth in the inward parts; and if sincerity be wanting all that we do cannot please God. The gospel of Christ is not accommodated to the vain fancies and lusts of men, to gratify their appetites and passions: But, on the contrary, it was designed for the mortifying their corrupt affections and delivering them from the power of *fancy*, that they might be brought under the power of *faith*. *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*, Gal. i. 10.

3. They acted under the consideration of God's omniscience, as in the sight of him who *trieth our hearts*. This is indeed the great motive to sincerity, to consider God not only seeth all that we do, but knoweth our thoughts *as far off*, and searcheth the heart. He is well acquainted with all our aims and designs, as well as our actions, and it is from this God that trieth our hearts, that we must receive our reward.

The evidences of the apostle's sincerity do follow, and they are these,

1. He avoided flattery. *Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know*, ver. 5. He and his fellow-labourers preached Christ and him crucified, and did not aim to gain an interest in men's affections for themselves by glorying and fawning, and wheedling them. No, they were far from that; nor did they flatter men in their sins; nor tell them if they would be of his party they might live as they listed: he did not flatter them with vain hopes, nor indulge them in any evil work or way, promising them life, and so *daubing with untempered mortar*.

2. He avoided covetousness. He did not make the ministry a cloak, or a covering for covetousness, as God was witness, ver. 5. His design was not to enrich himself by preaching the gospel: so far from that, he did not condition with them for bread. He was not like the false apostles, who through covetousness with vain words made merchandise of the people, 2 Pet. ii. 3.

3. He avoided ambition and vain-glory. *Nor of men sought we glory; neither of you, nor yet of others*, ver. 6. They neither expected people's purses nor their caps, neither to be enriched by them or carested and adored by them, and called *rabbis*. This apostle exhorts the Galatians, chap. v. 26, *not to be desirous of vain glory*; his ambition was to obtain that honour which comes from God, John v. 41.

He tells them they might have used greater authority as apostles, and expected greater esteem, and demanded maintenance, which is meant by the phrase of *being burdensome*; because perhaps some would have thought this too great a burden for them to bear.

7. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 9. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: 11. As you know, how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you (as a father doth his children) 12. That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

In these words the apostle reminds the Thessalonians of the manner of their conversation among them. And,

(1.) He mentions the gentleness of their behaviour. *We were gentle among you*, ver. 7. He shewed great mildness and tenderness, who might have acted with the authority of an apostle of Christ. Such a behaviour greatly recommendeth religion, and is most agreeable to God's gracious dealings with sinners, in and by the gospel. This great apostle though he abhorred and avoided flattery, was most condescending to all men. He accommodated himself to all men's capacities, and became all things to all men. He shewed the kindness and care of a nurse that cherisheth her children: And this is the way to win people rather than to rule with rigour. The word of God is indeed powerful; and as it cometh oftentimes with awful authority upon the minds of men, as it always hath enough in it to convince every impartial judgment, yet it cometh with the more pleasing power, when the ministers of the gospel recommend themselves to the affections of the people: And as a nursing mother beareth with forwardness in a child, and condescends to mean offices for its good, and draws out her breast, cherishing it in her bosom; so in like manner should the ministers of Christ behave towards their people. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, and patient*, 2 Tim. ii. 24. This gentleness and goodness the apostle expressed several ways.

1. By the most affectionate desire of their welfare. *Being affectionately desirous of you*, ver. 8. The apostle had a most affectionate love to their persons, and sought them, not theirs; themselves, not their goods; and to gain them, not to be a gainer by them: or to make a merchandise of them: It was their spiritual and eternal welfare and salvation that he was earnestly desirous of.

2. By great readiness to do them good; willingly imparting to them not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls, ver. 8. See here the manner of Paul's preaching. He spared no pains therein. He was willing to run hazards, and venture his soul or life in preaching the gospel: He was willing to spend and be spent in the service of men's soul; and as they who give bread to the hungry from a charitable principle, are said to impart their souls in what they give, Isa. lviii. 10. so did the apostles in giving forth the bread of life; so dear were these Thessalonians in particular to this apostle, and so great was his love to them.

3. By bodily labour to prevent their charge; or that his ministry might not be expensive and burdensome to them. *You remember our labour and travel, for labouring night and day, &c.* ver. 9. He denied himself the liberty he had of taking wages from the churches. To the labour of the ministry, he added that of his calling, as a tent-maker, that he might get his own bread. We are not to suppose the apostle spent the whole night and day in bodily labour, or work to supply the necessities of his body; for then he would have had no time for the work of the ministry. But he spent part of the night as well as the day in this work, and was willing to forego his rest in the night, that he might have an opportunity to do good to the souls of men in the day-time. A good example is here set before the

ministers of the gospel, to be industrious for the salvation of men's souls: though it will not follow they are always obliged to preach freely: There is no general rule to be drawn from this instance; either that ministers may at no time work with their hands for supply of their outward necessities, or that they ought always so to do.

4. By the holiness of their conversation, concerning which he appeals not only to them, but to God also, ver. 10. *Ye are witnesses, and God also*. They were observers of their outward conversation in public before men, and God was witness not only of their behaviour in secret, but of the inward principles from whence they acted. Their behaviour was holy towards God, just towards all men, and unblameable, without giving cause of scandal or offence; and they were careful not only not to give offence to them that were without, but to them also that did believe, that they might give no ill example; that their preaching and living might be all of a piece. Herein, said this apostle, *do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men*, Acts xxxiv. 16.

(2.) He mentions their faithful discharge of the work and office of the ministry, ver. 11, 12. Concerning this also, he could appeal to them as witnesses; Paul and his fellow-labourers were not only good Christians but faithful ministers. And we should not only be good to our general calling as Christians, but in our particular callings and relations. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians, not only informing them in their duty, but exciting and quickening them to the performance of it, by proper motives and arguments. And he comforted them also, endeavouring to cheer and support their spirits under difficulties and discouragements they might meet with: And this he did not only publicly but privately also, and from house to house, Acts xx. 20. and charged every one of them by personal addresses; and this some think is intended by the similitude of a father's charging his children. This expression also denoteth the affectionate and compassionate counsels and consolation which this apostle used. He was their spiritual father; and as he cherished them like a nursing mother, so he charged them as a father, with a father's affection, rather than a father's authority. *As my beloved sons, I warn you*, 1 Cor. iv. 14.

The manner of this apostle's exhortation ought to be regarded by ministers in particular for their imitation, and the matter of it is greatly to be regarded by them and all others; namely, that they would walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his kingdom and glory, ver. 12. Observe, 1. What is our great gospel-privilege, that God hath called us to his kingdom and glory. The gospel calls us into the kingdom and state of grace here, and unto the kingdom and state of glory hereafter: To heaven and happiness as our end, and to holiness as the way to that end. 2. What is our great gospel-duty, that we walk worthy of God: that the temper of our minds and tenor of our lives be answerable to this call, and suitable to this privilege. We should accommodate ourselves to the intention and design of the gospel, and live suitably to our profession and privileges, our hopes and expectations, as becometh those that are called with such an high and holy calling.

13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 14. For ye, brethren, become followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: 15. Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Here observe,

(1.) The apostle maketh mention of the success of his ministry among these Thessalonians, ver. 13. which is expressed,

1. By the manner of their receiving the word of God. *When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God*. Where note, 1. That the word of the gospel is preached by men like ourselves, men of like passions and infirmities with others. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels*. The word of God these Thessalonians received, they heard from the apostles. 2. However, it is in truth the word of God. Such was the word the apostles preached by divine inspiration, and such is that which is left upon record, written in the scriptures by divine inspiration; and such as that word which in our days is preached, being either contained, or evidently founded on, or deduced from these sacred oracles. 3. They are greatly to blame, who give out their own fancies or injunctions for the word of God. This is the vilest way of imposing upon people, and to deal unfaithfully. 4. They are also to blame, that in hearing of the word, look no further than to the ministry of men, or the words of men, who are only, or chiefly pleased with the elegance of the stile, or the beauty of the composition, or the voice and manner in which the word is preached, and expect to receive their advantage herein. 5. We should receive the word of God as the word of God, with affections suitable to the holiness, wisdom, verity, and goodness thereof. The words of men are frail and perishing like themselves, and sometimes false, and foolish, and fickle: But God's word is holy, wise, just, and faithful; and like its author liveth and abideth for ever. Let us accordingly receive and regard it.

2. By the wonderful operation of this word they received. *It effectually worketh in them that believe*, ver. 13. They that by faith receive the word, find it profitable: *It doth good to them that walk uprightly*, and by its wonderful effects doth evidence itself to be the word of God. This converts their souls, and enlightens their minds, and rejoiceth their hearts, &c. Psalm xix. and such as have this inward testimony of the truth of the scriptures, the word of God, by the effectual operations thereof on their hearts, have the best evidence of their divine original to themselves, though this is not sufficient to convince others who are strangers thereto.

(2.) He mentions the good effects his successful preaching had,

1. Upon himself and fellow-labourers: It was their constant cause of thankfulness. *For this cause thank we God without ceasing*, ver. 13. The apostle expresses his thankfulness to God so often upon this account, that he seemeth to think he never could be sufficiently thankful that God had counted him faithful, and put him into the ministry, and made his ministrations successful.

2. Upon themselves. The word wrought effectually in them, not only to be examples unto others in faith and good works, which he had mentioned before,

before, but also in constancy and patience under sufferings and trials for the sake of the gospel. *Ye became followers of the churches of God, and have suffered like things as they have done*, ver. 14. and with like courage and constancy, with like patience and hope. Note, The cross is the Christian's mark: if we are called to suffer, we are called only to be followers of the churches of God; *so persecuted they the prophets that were before you*. Matt. v. 12. It is a good effect of the gospel, when we are enabled to suffer for its sake. The apostle mentions the sufferings of the churches of God, which in Judea were in Christ Jesus. Those in Judea first heard the gospel, and they first suffered for it. For the Jews were the most bitter enemies Christianity had, and were especially enraged against their countrymen that embraced Christianity. Note, Bitter zeal and fiery persecution will set countrymen at variance, and break through all the bonds of nature, as well as contradict all the rules of religion. In every city where the apostles went to preach the gospel, the Jews stirred the inhabitants up against them. They were the ringleaders of persecution in all places, so in particular it was at Thessalonica, Acts xvii. 5. *The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar*. Upon this occasion the apostle gives a character of the unbelieving Jews, ver. 15. enough to justify their final rejection, and the ruin of their place, and church, and nation, which was now approaching.

1. They killed the Lord Jesus, and impudently and presumptuously wished that his blood might be on them and their children.

2. They killed their own prophets: So they had done all along. Their fathers had done so: They had been a persecuting generation.

3. They hated the apostles, and did them all the mischief they could. They persecuted them, and drove and chafed them from place to place; and no marvel, if they killed the Lord Jesus, that they persecuted his followers.

4. They pleased not God. They had quite lost all sense of religion, and due care to do their duty to God. It was a most fatal mistake to think, they did God service by killing God's servants. Murder and persecution are most hateful to God, and cannot be justified on any pretence: it is contrary to natural religion, that no zeal for any true or only pretended institution of religion, can ever excuse it.

5. They were contrary to all men. Their persecuting spirit was a perverse spirit; contrary to the light of nature, and contrary to humanity; contrary to the welfare of all men, and contrary to the sentiments of all men not under the power of bigotry.

6. They had an implacable enmity to the Gentiles, and envied them the offers of the gospel, forbidding the apostles to speak to them that they might be saved. The means of salvation had long been confined to the Jews. Salvation is of the Jews, saith our Saviour. And they were envious against the Gentiles, and angry that they should be admitted to share in the means of salvation. Nothing provoked them more than our Saviour's speaking to them at any time concerning this matter; this enraged the Jews at Jerusalem, when, in his defence, Paul told them, *he was sent unto the Gentiles*, Acts xxii. 21. They heard him patiently till he uttered these words, but then could endure no longer; but lifted up their voices and said, *Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live*. Thus did the Jews fill up their sins; and nothing tends more to any person or people's filling up the measure of their sins, than opposing the gospel, and obstructing the progress of it, and hindering the salvation of precious souls. For the sake of these things wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, i. e. wrath was determined against them, and would soon overtake them. It was not many years after this that Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jewish nation cut off by the Romans. Note, When the measure of any man's iniquity is full, and he hath sinned to the uttermost, then cometh wrath, and that to the uttermost.

17. But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. 18. Wherefore we would have come unto you, (even I Paul) once and again; but Satan hindered us. 19. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown, of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy.

In these words the apostle apologizeth for his absence.

Here observe,

(1.) He tells them they were involuntarily forced from them. *We, brethren, were taken from you*, ver. 17. Such was the rage of his persecutors. He was unwillingly sent away by night to Berea, Acts xvi. 20.

(2.) Though he was absent in body, yet he was present in heart. He had still a remembrance of them, and great care for them.

(3.) Even his bodily absence was but for a short time (the time of an hour) time is short, all our time on earth is short and uncertain; whether we are present with our friends or absent from them. The world is not a place where we are always or long to be together. It is in heaven holy souls shall meet, and never part more.

(4.) He earnestly desired, and endeavoured to see them again. *We endeavoured more abundantly to see your face with great desire*, ver. 17. So that the apostle, at least, intended his absence should be put for a short time. His desire and endeavour was to return again very soon to Thessalonica. But men of business are not masters of their own time. Paul did his endeavour, and he could do more, ver. 18.

(5.) He tells them Satan hindered his return, ver. 18. i. e. either some enemy or enemies, or the great enemy of mankind, who stirred up opposition to Paul, either in his return to Thessalonica, when he intended to return thither, or stirred up such contentions or dissensions in those places whither he went, as made his presence necessary. Note, Satan is a constant enemy to the work of God, and doth all he can to obstruct it.

(6.) He assureth them of his affection and high esteem for them, though he was not able, as yet, to be present with them, according to his desire. They were his hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing; his glory and joy. These are expressions of great and endeared affection and high estimation. And it is happy, when ministers and people have such mutual affection and esteem of each other; and especially if they shall thus rejoice, if they that sow, and they that reap, shall then rejoice together, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

The apostle here put the Thessalonians in mind, that though he could not come to them as yet, and though he should never be able to come to them, yet our Lord Jesus Christ will come, nothing shall hinder that. And further, when he shall come, all must appear in his presence, or before him; Ministers and people must all appear before him, and faithful people will be the glory and joy of faithful ministers in that great and glorious day.

In this chapter the apostle giveth further evidence of his love to the Thessalonians, reminding them of his sending Timothy to them, with the mention of the design therein, and his inducements so to do, ver. 1—5. By acquainting them of his great satisfaction at the return of Timothy, with good tidings concerning them, ver. 6—10. And concluded with fervent prayer for them, ver. 11, to the end.

1. WHEREFORE when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone: 2. And sent Timotheus our brother and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: 3. That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 4. For verily when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass; and he know. 5. For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

In these words the apostle gives an account of his sending Timothy to the Thessalonians; though he was hindered from going to them himself, yet his love was such, that he could not forbear sending Timothy to them; though he was very useful to him, and could not well spare him, yet he was content, for their good, to be left alone at Athens. Note, Those ministers do not duly value the establishment and welfare of their people, who cannot deny themselves in many things for that end. Observe,

(1.) The character he giveth of Timothy, ver. 2. *We send Timotheus our brother*: Elsewhere he calls him *his son*; here he calls him *brother*. Timothy was Paul's junior in age, his inferior in gifts and graces, and of a lower rank in the ministry, For Paul was an apostle, and Timothy but an evangelist; yet Paul calls him brother. This was an instance of the apostle's humility, and shewed his desire to put honour upon Timothy, and to recommend him to the esteem of the churches. He calls him also a *minister of God*. Note, Ministers of the gospel of Christ, are the ministers of God, to promote the kingdom of God among men. He calls him also his *fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ*. Note, Ministers of the gospel must look upon themselves as labourers in the Lord's vineyard; they have an honourable office and hard work, yet a good work. *This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work*, 1 Tim. iii. 1. And ministers should look upon one another as fellow-labourers; and should therefore love one another, and strengthen one another's hands, not strive and contend one with another, which will hinder their work; but strive together to carry on the great work they are engaged in, viz. to preach and publish the gospel of Christ, and to persuade people to embrace and entertain it, and live suitably thereto.

(2.) The end and design why Paul sent Timothy, which was to establish them, and comfort them concerning their faith, ver. 2. Paul had converted them to the Christian faith, and now he was desirous that they might be confirmed and comforted: That they might be confirmed in the choice they had made of the Christian religion, and be comforted in the profession and practice of it. Note, The more we are comforted the more we shall be confirmed. Because when we find pleasure in the ways of God, we shall thereby be engaged to continue and persevere therein. The apostle's design was to establish and comfort the Thessalonians concerning their faith. Concerning the object of their faith, viz. the truths of the gospel; and particularly that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world, and so wise and good, so powerful and faithful, that they might rely upon him. Concerning the recompence of faith, which was more than sufficient to balance all their losses and reward all their labours.

(3.) The motives inducing Paul to send Timothy for this end, viz. a godly fear and jealousy, lest they should be moved from the faith of Christ, ver. 3. He was desirous that no man, no one among them, should be moved or shaken in mind; that they should not apostatize or waver in faith. And yet he apprehended there was danger, and feared the consequence.

1. There was danger by reason of affliction and persecution for the sake of the gospel, ver. 3. These Thessalonians could not but perceive what afflictions the apostles and preachers of the gospel met with, and that might possibly stumble them; and also those who made profession of the gospel were persecuted, and without doubt these Thessalonians themselves were afflicted.

By reason of the tempter's subtilty and malice. The apostle was afraid, lest by some means the tempter had tempted them, ver. 3. The devil is a subtle and unwearyed tempter, that seeks an opportunity to beguile and destroy us, and taketh all advantages against us, both in a time of prosperity and adversity; and hath often been successful in his attacks upon persons under afflictions. He hath often prejudiced the minds of men against religion, on account of the sufferings its professors are exposed to. We have reason therefore to be jealous over ourselves and others, lest we be ensnared by him.

The consequences the apostle feared was, lest his labour should be in vain: And thus it would have been if the tempter had tempted them, and prevailed against them to move them from their faith. They had lost what they had wrought, and the apostle would have lost what he laboured for. Note, It is the devil's design to hinder the good fruit and effect of the preaching the gospel. If he cannot hinder ministers from labouring in the word and doctrine, he will, if he be able, hinder them of the success of their labours. Note also, Faithful ministers are much concerned about the success of their labours. No one would willingly labour in vain; and ministers are loth to spend their strength and pains, and time for nought.

To prevent this danger, with its bad consequence, the apostle tells them what care he took in sending Timothy. 1. To put them in mind of what he had told them before concerning suffering tribulation, ver. 4. He saith, ver. 3. *We are appointed thereunto*, i. e. unto afflictions. So is the will and purpose of God, that through many afflictions we must enter into his kingdom. Their troubles and persecutions did not come by chance, not merely from the wrath and malice of the enemies of religion, but by the appointment of God. It only came to pass according as God had determined, and they knew he had told them before it would be; so that they should not think it strange, and being forewarned they should be forearmed. Note, The apostles were so far from flattering people with an expectation of worldly prosperity in religion, that on the contrary they told them plainly they must count upon trouble in the flesh. And herein they followed the example of their great Master, the author of our faith. Besides, it might prove a confirmation of their faith, when they perceived, that it only happened to them as was predicted before.

2. To know their faith: That so he might inform the apostles, whether they remained steadfast under all their sufferings, whether their faith failed or not: Because, if their faith did not fail, they would be able to stand their ground against the tempter and all his temptations. Their faith would be a shield to defend them against all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. vi. 16.

6. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you. 7. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God: 10. Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Here we have Paul's great satisfaction upon the return of Timothy with good tidings from the Thessalonians. In which we may observe,

(1.) The good report Timothy made concerning them, ver. 6. Without question he was a willing messenger of those good tidings. Concerning their faith, i. e. concerning their steadfastness in the faith, that they were not shaken in mind, nor turned aside from the profession of the gospel. Their love also did continue; their love to the gospel, and the ministers of the gospel. For they had a good kind remembrance of the apostles, and that constantly or always. Their names were very dear to them, and the thoughts of them, and what they had received from them were very precious, inasmuch that they greatly desired to see them again, and receive some spiritual gift from them; and there was no love lost, for the apostle was as desirous to see them. It is happy where there is such mutual love between ministers and people. This tends to promote religion, and the success of the gospel. The world hated them, and therefore they should love one another.

(2.) The great comfort and satisfaction the apostle had in this good report concerning them, ver. 7, 8. Therefore brethren, we were comforted in all our affliction and distress. The apostle thought this good news of them was sufficient to balance all the troubles he met with. It was easy to him to bear affliction and persecution, or fightings from without, when he found the good success of his ministry, and constancy in the converts he had made to Christianity; and his distress of mind on account of his fears within, lest he had laboured in vain, was now in a good measure over, when he understood their faith and the perseverance of it. This put new life and spirit into the apostle, and made him vigorous and active in the work of the Lord. Thus he was not only comforted but greatly rejoiced also. Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord, ver. 8. It would have been a killing thing to the apostle, if the professors of religion had been unsteady, or proved apostates, whereas nothing was more encouraging than their constancy.

(3.) The effects of this were thankfulness and prayer to God on their behalf.

1. Observe, How thankful the apostle was, ver. 9. He was full of joy, and full of praise and thanksgiving. When we are most cheerful, we should be most thankful. What we rejoice in, we should give thanks for. This is to rejoice before our God, to spiritualize our joy. Paul speaketh, as if he could not tell how to express his thankfulness to God, or his joy and rejoicing for their sakes: But he was careful God should not lose the glory of that comfort he received in the welfare of his friends. His heart was enlarged with love to them, and with thanksgiving to God: He was willing to express the one and the other, as well as he could. As to thankfulness to God, this especially is very imperfect in the present state; but when we come to heaven we shall do this work better than we now can.

2. He prayed for them night and day, ver. 10. i. e. evening and morning, or very frequently; in the midst of the business of the day or slumber of the night, lifting up his heart to God in prayer. Thus we should pray always. And Paul's prayer was fervent prayer. He prayed exceedingly, and was earnest in his supplication. Note, When we are most thankful, we should also give ourselves to prayer; and those we give thanks for, yet have need to be prayed for. Those we most rejoice in, and that are our greatest comforts, must be our constant care, while in this world of temptation and imperfection. There was something still lacking in their faith, that Paul desired might be perfected, and to see their face in order thereunto.

Note, 1. The best of men have something wanting in their faith; if not as to the matter of it, there being some mysteries or doctrines not sufficiently known or believed by them, yet as to the clearness and certainty of their faith, their being some remaining darkneses and doubtings, at least as to the effects and operations of it, these being not so conspicuous and perfect as they should be. And,

2. The ministry of the word and ordinances is helpful, and to be desired and used for the perfecting of that which is lacking in our faith.

11. Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you. 12. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: 13. To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.

In these words we have the earnest prayer of the apostle. He desired to be instrumental in the further benefit of the Thessalonians; and the only way to do so whilst at a distance was by prayer for them, together with his writing or sending to them. He desired that their faith might be perfected which he could not be the proper cause or author of; for he pretended not to dominion over their faith, nor to have the donation of it, and here therefore concludeth with prayer for them. In which observe,

(1.) Whom he prayeth to, namely, God and Christ. Prayer is a part of religious worship, and all religious worship is due unto God only. Prayer is here made to God, even the Father and our Father; and also to Christ, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus Christ our Lord is God, even as God our Father is God. Prayer is to be offered to God our Father. So Christ taught his disciples to pray; and so the Spirit of adoption prompts them to pray, to cry Abba, Father. Prayer is not only to be offered in the name of Christ, but offered up to Christ himself as our Lord and our Saviour.

(4.) What he prayeth for, with respect to himself and his fellow-labourers, then on behalf of the Thessalonians.

1. He prays that they might have a prosperous journey to them by the

will of God: That their way might be directed to them, ver. 11. The taking of a journey to this or that place, one would think, is a thing depending so much upon a man's own will and lies so much in his own power, that Paul needed not by prayer to go to God about it. But the apostle knew that in God we live and move, and have our being; that we depend upon God in all our motions and actions, as well as for the continuance of life and being; that divine providence orders all our affairs, and that it is owing thereto if we prosper therein: That God our Father doth direct and order his children whither they shall go, and what they shall do: That our Lord Jesus Christ in a particular manner directs the motions of his faithful ministers, those stars which he holdeth in his right hand. Let us acknowledge God in all our ways, and he will direct our paths.

2. He prayeth for the prosperity for the Thessalonians; whether he should have an opportunity of coming to them or not, yet he earnestly prayeth for the prosperity of their souls; and there are two things he desired for them, which we should desire for ourselves and our friends.

1. That they might increase and abound in love, ver. 12. in love to one another, and in love to all men. Note, that mutual love is required of all Christians; and not only that they love one another, but that they also have a charitable disposition of mind, and due concern for the welfare of all men. Love is of God; and is the fulfilling of the gospel, as well as of the law. Timothy brought good tidings of their faith, yet something was lacking therein; and of their charity and love, and yet the apostle prayeth that that might increase and abound. Note, We have reason to desire to grow in every grace; and have need of the Spirit's influence in order to growth in grace; and the way to obtain that is prayer. We are beholden to God not only for the stock put into our hands at first, but for the improvement of it also. And to our prayer we must add endeavour. To excite this in the Thessalonians, the apostle again mentions his love, his abounding love towards him. The more we are beloved, the more loving we should be.

2. That they might be established unblameable in holiness, ver. 13. This spiritual benefit is mentioned as an effect of increasing and abounding love. To the end that he, i. e. the Lord, may establish your hearts. Note, The more we grow and abound in grace, and particularly in the grace of love, the more we are established and confirmed in it. Note also, That holiness is required of all those that would go to heaven, and that therein we must be unblameable, i. e. we must carry ourselves in every thing so, as that we may not in the least contradict the profession we make of holiness. Our desire should be to have our hearts established in holiness before God, and be preserved safe to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that we may be unblameable before God, even the Father now, and be presented blameless before the throne of his glory, when the Lord Jesus will come with all his saints. Note, 1. The Lord Jesus will certainly come, and come in his glory. 2. When he cometh his saints will come with him: They shall appear with him in glory. 3. Then the excellency as well as the necessity of holiness will appear; because without this no hearts shall be established at that day, nor shall any one be unblameable, or avoid everlasting condemnation.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter the apostle gives earnest exhortations to abound in holiness, with a caution against uncleanness, enforced with several arguments, ver. 1—9. He then mentions the great duties of brotherly love, and activity with industry in our callings, ver. 9—12. and concludeth with comforting them that mourneth for their relations and friends that died in the Lord, ver. 13—18.

1. FURTHERMORE then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. 2. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. 3. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5. Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6. That no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. 7. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Here we have,

(1.) An exhortation to abound in holiness, to abound more and more in that which is good, ver. 1, 2. In which we may observe,

1. The manner in which the exhortation is given, viz. very affectionately. The apostle intreateth them as brethren; he calls them so, and loved them as such. Because his love to them was very great, he exhorts them earnestly. We beseech you. The apostle was unwilling to take any denial, and therefore repeateth his exhortation again and again.

2. The matter of his exhortation; That they would abound more and more in holy walking, or excel in those things that are good, in good works. Their faith was justly famed abroad, and they were already examples to other churches. However the apostle would have them yet further to excel others, and to make further progress in holiness. Note, 1. Those who do most excel others, yet fall short of perfection. The very best of us should forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before. 1. It is not enough that we abide in the faith of the gospel, but we must abound in the work of faith. We must not only persevere to the end, but we should grow better, and walk more evenly and close with God.

3. The arguments with which the apostle enforceth his exhortation, viz. 1. They had been informed of their duty. They knew their Master's will, and could not plead their ignorance as an excuse. Now as faith, so knowledge is dead without practice. They had received of them who had converted them to Christianity, or being taught of them how they ought to walk: Where observe, the design of the gospel is not only to teach men what they should believe, but also how they ought to live: Not so much to fill men's minds with notions, as to regulate their temper and behaviour. The apostle taught them how to walk, not how to talk. To talk well without living well, will never bring us to heaven: For the character of those that are in Christ Jesus is this; They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2. Another argument is, that the apostle taught and exhorted them in the name

or by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was Christ's minister and ambassador, declaring to them what was the will and command of the Lord Jesus. 3. Another argument is this. Herein they would *please God*. Holy walking is most pleasing to the holy God, who is *glorious in holiness*. This ought to be the aim and ambition of every Christian, to please God, and to be accepted of him. We should not be *men-pleasers* or *flesh-pleasers*, but should walk so as to please God. 4. The rule according to which they ought to walk and act, i. e. *the commandments they had given them by the Lord Jesus Christ*; which were the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ himself; because given by authority and direction from him, and such as were agreeable to his will. The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ were only commissioned by him to teach men to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them, Matt. xxviii. 20. Though they had great authority from Christ, yet that was to teach men what Christ had commanded, not to give forth commandments of their own. They did not act as *lords over God's heritage*, 1 Pet. v. 3. nor should any do so that pretend to be their successors. The apostle could appeal to the Thessalonians who knew what commandments he gave them, that they were no other than what he had received from the Lord Jesus.

(2.) A caution against uncleanness, that being a sin directly contrary to sanctification, or that holy walking he so earnestly exhorts them to. This caution is expressed, and also enforced by many arguments.

1. It is expressed in these words: *That ye should abstain from fornication*, ver. 3. By which words we are to understand *all uncleanness* whatsoever, either in a married or unmarried state: To be sure *adultery* is here included, though *fornication* is particularly mentioned. And other sorts of uncleanness are also forbidden, of which it is a *shame even to speak*, though they are done by too many in secret. All that is contrary to chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour, is contrary to the command of God in the *decalogue*, and contrary to that holiness the *gospel* requireth.

2. There are several arguments to enforce this caution: as, 1. This branch of sanctification in particular, is the will of God, ver. 3. Not only is it the will of God in general that we should be holy, because *he that called us is holy*; and because we are chosen unto salvation through the *sanctification of the Spirit*: And not only doth God require holiness in the heart, but also purity in our bodies, and that we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both in flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Wherever the body is, as it ought to be, devoted to God and dedicated and set apart for him, it should be kept clean and pure for his service. And as chastity is one branch of our sanctification, so this is one thing God commands in his law, and what his grace effects in all true believers. This will be greatly for our honour. So much is plainly applied, ver. 4. Whereas the contrary will be a great dishonour. And his reproach shall not be wiped away, Prov. vi. 33. The body is here called the vessel of the soul that dwells therein, so 1 Sam. xxi. 5. and that must be kept pure from defiling lusts. Every one should be careful in this matter as he valueth his own honour, and will not be contemptible on this account: That his inferior appetites and passions gain not the ascendancy, and tyrannize over his reason and conscience, and enslave the superior faculties of his soul. What can be more dishonourable than for a rational soul to be enslaved by bodily affections and brutal appetites? 3. To indulge the lusts of concupiscence, is to *live and act like heathens*; even as the *Gentiles that know not God*, ver. 5. The Gentiles, and especially the Grecians, were commonly guilty of some sins of uncleanness which were not so evidently forbidden by the light of nature. But they did not know God nor his mind and will so well as Christians do, and should know this his will, viz. our sanctification in this branch of it. It is not so much to be wondered at therefore if the Gentiles indulge their fleshly appetites and lusts; but Christians should not walk as unconverted Gentiles, in *lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, &c.* 1. Pet. iv. 3. because they that are in Christ, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. 4. The sin of uncleanness, especially adultery, is a great piece of injustice, that God will be the avenger of; so we may understand those words, *That no man go beyond or defraud his brother*, ver. 6. in any matter, *is to $\pi\epsilon\pi\alpha\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$* , in this matter of which the apostle is speaking in the preceding and following verses, viz. the sin of uncleanness. Some understand these words as a further warning and caution against injustice and oppression, all fraud and deceit in our dealings with men, which is certainly a crime, and which is contrary to the gospel. And Christians should not impose upon the ignorance and necessity of those they deal with, and so go beyond them, nor should they by equivocations or lying arts defraud them: and although this may be practised by some, and lie long undiscovered, and so go unpunished among them; yet the righteous God will render a recompence. But the meaning may rather be to shew the injustice and wrong that in many cases is done by the sin of uncleanness: not only is fornication and other acts of uncleanness sins against his own body that committed them, 1 Cor. vi. 13. not only are they very injurious to the sinner himself both in soul and body: but sometimes very injurious and no less than defrauding, and acts of injustice to others; particularly to them that are joined together in the marriage covenant, and to their posterity. And as this sin is of such a heinous nature, so it follows that God will be the avenger of it. *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*, Heb. xiii. 4. This the apostle had forewarned and testified by his gospel; which as it contained *exceeding great and precious promises*, so also it revealed from heaven the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness among men, Rom. i. 18. 5. The sin of uncleanness is contrary to the nature and design of our Christian calling. *For God hath called us not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*, ver. 7. The law of God forbids all impurity, and the gospel requires the greatest purity, that calls us from uncleanness unto holiness. 6. The contempt therefore of God's law and gospel is the contempt of God himself. *He that despiseth, despiseth God, not man only*. Some might possibly make light of the precepts of purity and holiness, because they heard them from men like themselves; but the apostle lets them know that they were God's commands, and to violate them was no less than to despise God. He adds that God had given Christians his Spirit; intimating that all sorts of uncleanness do in an especial manner grieve the holy Spirit, and will provoke him to withdraw from us; and also the holy Spirit is given unto us to arm us against these sins, and to help us to mortify these deeds of the body that we may live, Rom. viii. 13.

9. But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10. And indeed you do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more: 11. And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands (as we commanded you.) 12. That ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

In these words the apostle mentions the great duties,

(1.) *Of brotherly love*. This he exhorts them to increase in yet more and more. The exhortation is introduced, not with a compliment, but with a commendation; because they were remarkable in the exercise of it; which made it less needful he should write to them about it, ver. 9. Thus by his good opinion of them he insinuated himself into their affections, and so maketh way for his exhortation to them. Note, We should take notice of that in others which is good to their praise, that by so doing we may lay engagements upon them to abound therein more and more. Observe,

1. What it is that the apostle condemneth in them. It was not so much their own virtue as God's grace, yet he taketh notice of the evidence they shewed of the grace of God in them. It was God's grace he taketh special notice of: that God had taught them this good lesson; *Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another*, ver. 9. Whoever doth that which is good, are taught of God to do it, and God must have the glory. All that are lovingly taught of God are taught this lesson, to love one another. This is the livery of Christ's family. Note also, That the teaching of the Spirit exceeds the teachings of men; and as no man should teach contrary to what God teacheth, so none can teach so effectually as he teacheth; and men's teaching is vain and useless unless God teach also. 2. The Thessalonians gave good evidence of their being taught of God, by their love to the brethren in all Macedonia, ver. 10. They not only loved them of their own city and society; or such as were near them, and just of their own sentiments; but their love was extensive: And a true Christian is so to all the saints, though distant from him in place, and differing from him in such opinions or practices of less moment.

2. The exhortation itself is to increase more and more in this great grace and duty of brotherly love, ver. 10. Though these Thessalonians had in some sense no need of an exhortation to brotherly love, as if it were wholly wanting; yet they must be exhorted to pray for more, and labour for more. There are none on this side heaven who love in perfection. Those that are eminent in this or any other grace, have need of increase therein as well as of perseverance unto the end.

(2.) *Of quietness and industry in their callings*. Observe,

1. The apostle exhorteth to these duties; that they should study to be quiet, ver. 11. It is a most desirable thing to have calm and quiet temper, and to be of a peaceable and quiet behaviour. This tends much to our own and others happiness; and Christians should study how to be quiet. We should be ambitious and industrious how to be calm and quiet in our minds, and in patience to possess our own souls, and to be quiet towards others; or of a meek and mild, a gentle and peaceable disposition, not given to strife, or contention, or division. Satan is very busy to disquiet us; and we have that in our own hearts which disposeth us to be inquiet. Therefore let us study to be quiet. It follows, *do your own business*; and when we go beyond that, we expose ourselves to a great deal of inquietude. Those who are busy-bodies, meddling in other men's matters, generally have but little quiet in their own minds; and cause great disturbances among their neighbours; at least they seldom mind the other exhortation to be diligent in their own calling, to work with their own hands. And yet this was what the apostle commanded them, and what is required of us also. Christianity doth not discharge us of the work and duty of our particular callings, but teacheth us to be diligent therein.

2. The exhortation is enforced with a double argument. Namely, 1. So we shall live creditably. Thus we shall walk honestly, or decently and creditably towards them that are without, ver. 12. This will be to act as becomes the gospel, and will gain a good report from them that are strangers, yea enemies to it. Note, It is a great ornament to religion, when the professors of it are of meek and quiet spirits, diligent to do their own business, and not busy-bodies in other men's matters. 2. We shall live comfortably and have lack of nothing, ver. 13. People oftentimes by their slothfulness bring themselves into narrow circumstances, and reduce themselves to great straits, and are liable to many wants; when such as are diligent in their own business live comfortably, and have lack of nothing. They are not burthensome to their friends, nor scandalous to strangers: they earn their own bread, and have the greatest pleasure in so doing.

13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. 15. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

In these words the apostle comforts the Thessalonians that mourned for the death of his relations and friends that died in the Lord. His design is to dissuade them from excessive grief, or inordinate sorrow on that account. All grief for the death of friends is far from being unlawful, we may weep at least for ourselves if we do not weep for them; weep for our own loss, though that may be their gain. Yet we must not be immoderate or excessive in our sorrows; because,

1. This looketh as if we had no hope, ver. 13. It is to act too much like the Gentiles, who had no hope of a better life after this; whereas we Christians, who have a most sure hope, the hope of eternal life after this, which God who cannot lie hath promised us, should moderate all our joys and our sorrows on account of any worldly thing. This hope is more than enough to balance all our griefs upon the account of any of the crosses of the present time.

2. This is an effect of ignorance concerning those that are dead, ver. 13. There are some things which we cannot but be ignorant of concerning them that are asleep: for the land they are removed to is a land of darkness, which we know but little of, and have no correspondence with. To go among the dead, is to go among we know not whom, and to live we know not how: Death is an unknown thing, and the state of the dead, or the state after death, we are much in the dark about; yet there are some things concerning them especially that die in the Lord, that we need not, and ought not to be ignorant of: and if those things are rightly understood and duly considered, they will be sufficient to allay our sorrow concerning them, viz.

1. They

1. *They sleep in Jesus.* They are *asleep*, ver. 13. They are *fallen asleep in Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 18. Death doth not annihilate them. It is but a sleep to them. It is their rest, and undisturbed rest. They are retired out of this troublesome world, to rest from all their labours and sorrows, and they sleep in Jesus, ver. 14. Being still in union with him, they sleep in his arms, are under his special care and protection. Their souls are in his presence, and their dust under his care and power; so that they are not *lost*, nor are they *losers*, but great gainers by death, and their removal out of this world is into a better.

2. They shall be *raised up* from the dead, and awaked out of their sleep, for God will bring them with him, ver. 14. They then are with God, and are better where they are, than when they were here; and when God cometh he will bring them with him. The doctrine of the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ, is a great antidote against the fear of death, and inordinate sorrow for the death of our Christian friends; and this doctrine we have a full assurance of, because we believe that Jesus died and rose again, ver. 14. It is taken for granted, that as Christians they knew and believed this. The death and resurrection of Christ are fundamental articles of the Christian religion, and gives us hope of a joyful resurrection: For Christ being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of them that slept; and therefore they who are fallen asleep in him are not perished or lost, 1 Cor. xv. 18—20. His resurrection is a full confirmation of all that is said in the gospel, or by the word of the Lord, which hath brought life and immortality to light.

3. Their state and condition shall be glorious and happy at the second coming of Christ. This the apostle informeth the Thessalonians of by the word of the Lord, ver. 15. i. e. by divine revelation from the Lord Jesus: For though the resurrection of the dead, and future state of blessedness, was part of the creed of the Old Testament saints, yet it is much more clearly revealed in and by the gospel. By this word of the Lord we know, 1. That the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven in all the pomp and power of the upper world, ver. 16. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. He ascended up into heaven after his resurrection, and is passed through these material heavens into the third heaven, that must retain him till the restitution of all things; and then he will come again, and appear in his glory. He will descend from heaven into this our air, ver. 17. The appearance will be with pomp and power, with a shout; the shout of a king, and the power and authority of a mighty king and conqueror, with the voice of the archangel; an innumerable company of angels will attend him; perhaps one, as general of those host of the Lord, shall give notice of his approach, and the glorious appearance of this great Redeemer and judge shall be proclaimed and ushered in by the trumpet of God. For the trumpet shall sound, and that will wake them that sleep in the dust of the earth, and shall summon all the world to appear. For,

2. The dead shall be raised. The dead in Christ shall rise first, ver. 16. i. e. before those that are found alive at Christ's coming shall be changed; and so it appeareth that those who shall then be found alive, shall not prevent them that are asleep, ver. 15. The first care of the Redeemer in that day will be about his dead saints; he will raise them before the great change passeth on them that shall be found alive; so that those that did not sleep in death will have no greater privilege nor joy at that day, than those who fell asleep in Jesus.

3. They that shall be found alive will then be changed. They shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, ver. 17. At or immediately before this rapture into the clouds, those that are alive will undergo a mighty change, that will be equivalent to dying. This change is so mysterious we cannot comprehend it, we know little or nothing of it, 1 Cor. xv. 51. Only in the general, this mortal must put on immortality; and these bodies shall be made fit to inherit the kingdom of God, which flesh and blood in its present state is not capable of. This change will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1 Cor. xv. 52. in the very instant, or not long after the raising up them that sleep in Jesus. And those who are raised, and thus changed, shall meet together in the clouds, and there meet with their Lord to congratulate his coming, and receive the crown of glory he will then bestow upon them, and to be assessors with him in judgment, approving and applauding that sentence he will then pass upon the prince of the power of the air, and all the wicked who shall be doomed to destruction with the devil and his angels.

4. Here is the bliss of the saints at that day, they shall be ever with the Lord, ver. 17. It will be some part of their felicity, that all the saints shall meet together, and remain together, forever: But the principal happiness of heaven is this, to be with the Lord, to see him, live with him, and enjoy him for ever. This should comfort the saints upon the death of their pious friends: That although death hath made a separation, yet their souls and bodies will meet again; we and they shall meet together again: We and they with all the saints shall meet our Lord; and be with him for ever, no more to be separated either from him or from one another for ever. And the apostle would have us comfort one another with these words, ver. 18. We should endeavour to support one another in times of sorrow; not deaden one another's spirits, nor weaken one another's hands, but should comfort one another; and that may be done by serious consideration and discourse on the many good lessons to be learned from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the second coming of Christ, and the glory of the saints in that day.

CHAP. V.

The apostle having spoken in the end of the foregoing chapter concerning the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ; he proceeds to speak concerning the usefulness of enquiring after the particular time of Christ's coming, which would be sudden and terrible to the wicked, but comfortable to the saints, ver. 1—5. He then exhorts them to the duties of watchfulness, sobriety, and exercise of faith, love, and hope, as being suitable to their state, ver. 6—10. In the next words he exhorts them to several duties they owed to others, or to one another, ver. 11—15. And afterwards to several other Christian duties of great importance, ver. 16—22. And then concludes this epistle, ver. 23—24.

1. **B**UT of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5. Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of night, nor of darkness.

In these words observe,

(1.) The apostle tells the Thessalonians, it was needless or useless to enquire about the particular time of Christ's coming. *Of the times and seasons, ye need not that I write unto you*, ver. 1. The thing is certain that Christ will come, and there is a certain time appointed for his coming; but there was no need that the apostle should write about that, and therefore he had no revelation given him; nor should they or we enquire into this secret, which the Father had reserved in his own power. *Of that day and hour knoweth no man.* Christ himself did not reveal this while upon earth: it was not in his commission as the great prophet of the church: nor did he reveal this to his apostles; there was no need of this; there are times and seasons for us to do our work in, that it is our duty and interest to know and observe; but the time and season when we must give up our account, we know not, nor is it needful we should know that. Note, There are many things which our vain curiosity desireth to know, which there is no necessity at all of our knowing; nor would our knowledge of them do us good.

(2.) He tells them the coming of Christ would be sudden, and a great surprise to most men, ver. 2. And this is what they knew perfectly, or might know, because our Lord himself had so said. *In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*, Matt. xxiv. 44. So Mark xiii. 35, 36. *Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.* And no doubt the apostle had told them, as of the coming of Christ, so also of his coming suddenly, which is the meaning of his coming as a thief in the night, Rev. xvi. 15. As the thief usually cometh in the dead time of the night, when he is least expected: such a surprise will the day of the Lord be: So sudden and surprising his appearance. And the knowledge of this will be more useful than to know the exact time, because this should awaken us to stand upon our watch, that we may be ready whenever he cometh.

(3.) He tells them how terrible Christ's coming would be to the ungodly, ver. 3. It will be to their destruction in that day of the Lord. The righteous God will bring ruin upon his, and his people's enemies; and this their destruction as it will be total and final, so, 1. It will be sudden. It will overtake them and fall upon them in the midst of their casual security and jollity; when they say in their hearts *peace and safety*, when they dream of felicity, and please themselves with vain amusements of their fancies or their senses, and think not of it, as travail cometh upon a woman with child, at the set time indeed, but was not perhaps just then expected, nor greatly feared. 2. It will be unavoidable destruction too. *They shall not escape*; they shall in no wise escape: There will be no means possible for them to avoid the terror or the punishment of that day. There will be no place where the workers of iniquity shall be able to hide themselves; no shelter from the storm, nor shadow from the burning heat that shall consume the wicked.

(4.) He tells them how comfortable this day will be to the righteous, ver. 4, 5. Where observe,

1. Their character and privilege. They are not in darkness; they are the children of the light, &c. This was the happy condition of the Thessalonians, and of all true Christians. They were not in a state of sin and ignorance as the heathen world, They were sometimes darkness, but were made light in the Lord. They were favoured with the divine revelation of things that are unseen and eternal, particularly concerning the coming of Christ, and the consequences thereof. They were the children of the day, for the day star had risen upon them; yea, the sun of righteousness had shined on them with healing under his wings. They were no longer under the darkness of heathenism, nor under the shadows of the law, but under the gospel, which brings life and immortality to light.

2. Their great advantage on this account: That that day should not overtake them as a thief, ver. 4. It was at least their own fault if they were surprised by that day. They had fair warning, and sufficient helps to provide against that day, and might hope to stand with comfort and confidence before the Son of man. This would be a time of refreshing to them from the presence of the Lord, who to them that look for him will appear without sin unto their salvation, and will come to them as a friend in the day, not as a thief in the night.

6. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7. For they that sleep, sleep in the night. 8. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast plate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath: but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. 10. Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

From what had been said, the apostle grounds seasonable exhortations to several useful duties.

(1.) To watchfulness and sobriety, ver. 6. These duties are distinct, yet they mutually befriend one another. For whilst we are compassed about with so many temptations to intemperance and excess, we shall not keep sober, unless we be upon our guard; and unless we keep sober, we shall not long watch.

1. Then let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch, i. e. we must not be secure and careless, nor indulge spiritual sloth and idleness. We must not be off our watch, but continually upon our guard against sin and temptation to it. The generality of men are too careless of their duty, and regardless of their spiritual enemies. They say *peace and safety*, when they are in the greatest danger; and doze away their precious moments, on which eternity depends, indulging idle dreams; and have no more thoughts and cares about another world, than men that are asleep have about this. Either they do not consider the things of another world at all, because they are asleep; or they do not consider them aright, because they dream. But let us watch, and act like men that are awake, and that stand upon their guard.

2. Let us also be sober, or temperate and moderate. Let us keep our natural desires and appetites after the things of this world within due bounds. Sobriety is usually opposed to excess in meats and drinks, and here particularly it is opposed to drunkenness: But it also extends to all other temporal things. Thus our Saviour warned his disciples, to take heed lest their hearts were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day came upon them unawares, Luke xxi. 34. Our moderation then as to all temporal things should be known to all men, because the Lord is at hand.

Besides this, watchfulness and sobriety are more suitable to the Christian's character and privilege, as being children of the day; because they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night, ver. 7. It is a most reproachful thing for men to sleep away the day-time, which is for

for *work* and not for *sleep*: To be drunken *in the day*, when so many eyes are upon them to behold their shame. It was not so strange if those who had not the benefit of divine revelation suffered themselves to be lulled asleep by the devil in carnal security; and if they laid the reins upon the neck of their appetites, and indulged themselves in all manner of riot and excess: for it was *night-time* with them; they were not sensible of their *danger*, therefore they *sleep*; they were not sensible of their *duty*, therefore they were *drunk*. But it ill becomes Christians to do thus. What! shall Christians, who have the light of the blessed gospel shining in their faces, be careless about their souls, and mindless of another world? They that have so many eyes upon them, should carry themselves decently.

(2.) To be well armed as well as watchful: To put on the whole armour of God. And this is necessary in order to such sobriety as becomes us, and will be a preparation for the day of the Lord; because our spiritual enemies are many, and mighty, and malicious; they draw many to their interest and keep them in it, by making them careless, and secure and presumptuous, by making them *drunk*; drunk with *pride*; drunk with *passion*; drunk and giddy with *self-conceit*; drunk with the *gratifications of sense*. So that we have need to arm ourselves against their attempts, by putting on the spiritual *breast-plate* to keep the heart, and the spiritual *helmet* to secure the head; and this spiritual armour consists of the three great graces of the Christians, *faith, love, and hope*, ver. 8.

1. We must live by *faith*, and that will keep us watchful and sober. If we believe that the eye of God (who is a spirit) is always upon us; that we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, that there is a world of spirits to prepare for, we shall see reason to watch and be sober. Faith will be our best defence against the assaults of our enemies.

2. We must get an heart inflamed with *love*; and this also will be our defence. True and fervent love to God, and the things of God, will keep us watchful and sober, and hinder our apostasy in times of trouble and temptations.

3. We must make salvation *our hope*, and should have a lively hope of it. This *good hope through grace* of eternal life will be as an *helmet* to defend the head, and hinder our being intoxicated with the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. If we have hope of salvation, let us take heed of doing any thing that shall shake our hopes, or render ourselves unworthy of, or unfit for, the great salvation we hope for. Having mentioned salvation and the hope of it, the apostle shews what grounds and reasons the Christians have to hope for this salvation; as to which observe, he saith nothing of *their meriting it*. No, the doctrine of our merits is altogether unscriptural and antisciptural: there is no foundation of any good hope upon that account. But our hopes are to be grounded, 1. Upon God's appointment; because *God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation*, ver. 9. if we would trace our salvation to the first cause, that is God's appointment. Those that live and die in darkness and ignorance, that sleep and are drunken as in the night, it is but too plain they are *appointed to wrath*; but as for those who are of the day, if they watch and be sober, it is evident they are *appointed to obtain salvation*. And the sureness and firmness of the divine appointment, is the great support and encouragement of our hope. Were we to obtain salvation by our own merit or power, we could have but little or no hope of it: but seeing we are to obtain it by virtue of God's appointment, which we are sure cannot be shaken, *for his purpose, according to election, shall stand*; on that we build unshaken hope, especially when we consider, 2. Christ's merit and grace, and that salvation is *by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us*. Our salvation therefore is owing to him, and our hopes of it grounded on, Christ's atonement as well as God's appointment: And as we should think on God's gracious design and purpose, so also on Christ's death and sufferings for this end, *that whether we wake or sleep*, i. e. whether we live or die, for death is but a sleep to believers, (as the apostle had before intimated) *we should live together with Christ*, i. e. live in union with him, and glory with him for ever. And as it is the salvation that Christinus hope for, to *be for ever with the Lord*; so one foundation of their hope is their union with him. And if they are *united with Christ*, and live in him, and live to him here; the sleep of death will be no prejudice to the spiritual life, much less to the life of glory hereafter. On the contrary, Christ hath died for us, that living and dying we might be *his*; that we might live to him whilst we are here, and live with him when we go hence.

11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. 12. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13. And to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves. 14. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15. See that none render evil for evil unto any man: but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

In these words the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to several duties.

(1.) Towards those that were nearly related to one another. Such should comfort themselves, or exhort one another, and edify one another, ver. 11.

1. They must *comfort* or *exhort* themselves and one another; for the original word may be rendered both these ways. And we may observe, as those are most able, and likely to comfort others who can comfort themselves; so the way to have comfort ourselves, or to administer comfort to others, is by compliance with the exhortation of the word. Note, We should not only be careful about our own comfort and welfare, but to promote the comfort and welfare of others also. He was a Cain, that said, *am I my brother's keeper?* We must bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

2. They must *edify* one another, by *following after those things whereby one may edify another*, Rom. xiv. 19. As Christians are *lively stones built up together a spiritual house*, they should endeavour to promote the good of the whole church, by promoting the work of grace in one another. And it is the duty of every one of us, to study that which is for the edification of those with whom we converse: *to please all men for their real profit*. We should communicate our knowledge and experience one to another. We should join in prayer and praise one with another. We should set a good example one before another. And it is the duty of those especially that live in the same vicinity and family, thus to comfort and edify one another; and this is the best neighbourhood, the best means to answer the end of society. Such as are nearly related together, and have affection for one another, as they have the greatest opportunity, so they are under the greatest

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obligation to do this kindness one to another. This the Thessalonians did (*which also ye do*) and this is what they are exhorted to continue and increase in doing. Note, Those that do what which is good, have need of further exhortations to excite them to do good, to do more good, as well as continue in doing what they do.

(2.) He sheweth them their duty towards their ministers, ver. 12, 13. Though the apostle himself was driven from them, yet they had others who laboured among them, and to whom they owed these duties. The apostle here exhorts them to observe,

1. How the ministers of the gospel are described by *the work* of their office; and they should rather mind the *work* and duty they are called to, than affect venerable and honourable *names* they may be called by. Their work is very weighty, and very honourable and useful. 1. Ministers must labour among their people, labour with diligence, and unto weariness, so the word in the original imports: *They must labour in the word and doctrine*, 1 Tim. v. 17. They are called *labourers*, and should not be *loiterers*. They must labour with their people, i. e. to instruct, and comfort, and edify them. And, 2. Ministers are to rule their people also, so the word is rendered, 1 Tim. v. 17. Not rule with *rigour*, but with *love*. They must not exercise dominion as temporal lords; but rule as spiritual guides, by setting a good example to the flock. They are over the people *in the Lord*, to distinguish them from civil magistrates, and to denote also that they are but ministers under Christ, appointed by him, and must rule the people by Christ's laws, and not by laws of their own. This may also intimate the end of their office and all their labour; namely, the service and honour of the Lord. 3. They must also admonish the people, and that not only publicly, but privately, as their may be occasion. They must instruct them to do well, and should reprove them when they do ill. It is their duty not only to give good counsel, but also to give admonition: to give warning to the flock of the dangers they are liable to, and reprove for negligence or what else may be amiss.

2. What the duty of the people is towards their ministers. There is a mutual duty between ministers and people. If ministers should labour among the people; then, 1. The people must *know them*. As the shepherd should know his flock, so the sheep must know their shepherd. They must know his *person*, and hear his *voice*, and acknowledge him for their *pastor*, and pay due regard to his *teaching*, and *ruling*, and *admonitions*. 2. They must *esteem* their ministers *highly in love*; they should greatly value the office of the ministry, and honour and love the *persons* of their ministers, and shew their esteem and affection in all proper ways, and this *for their work's sake*; because their business is to promote the honour of Christ, and the welfare of men's souls. Note, Faithful ministers ought to be so far from being lightly esteemed because of their work, that they should be highly esteemed on the account thereof. The work of the ministry is so far from being a disgrace to them who upon other accounts deserve esteem, that it puts an honour upon them who are faithful and diligent, which otherwise they could lay no claim to; and will procure them that esteem and love among good people, which otherwise they could not expect.

(3.) He gives divers other exhortations touching the duty Christians owe to one another.

1. To be at peace among themselves, ver. 13. Some understand this exhortation, according to the reading in some copies, as referring to the people's duty to their ministers, to live peaceably with them, and not raise and promote dissensions at any time between minister and people, which will certainly prove an hindrance to the success of a minister's work, and the edification of the people. This is certain, ministers and people should avoid every thing that tends to alienate their affections one from another. And the people should be at peace among themselves, doing all they can to hinder any differences from rising or continuing among them, and using all proper means to preserve peace and harmony.

2. To warn the unruly, ver. 14. There will be in all societies some that walk disorderly, who go out of their rank and station: And it is not only the duty of ministers, but of private Christians also, to warn and admonish them. Such should be reprov'd for their sin, and warned of their danger, and told plainly of the injury they do their own souls, and the hurt they may do to others: Such should be put in mind of what they should do, and be reprov'd for their doing otherwise.

3. To comfort the feeble-minded, ver. 14. By these are intended the timorous and faint-hearted, or such as are dejected and of a sorrowful spirit. Some are cowardly, and afraid of difficulties, and disheartened at the thoughts of hazards and losses, and afflictions; now such should be encouraged; we should not despise them, but comfort them: and who knows what good a kind and comfortable word may do them?

4. To support the weak, ver. 14. Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, and help their infirmities, and lift at one end of the burden, and so help to bear it. It is the grace of God indeed, that must strengthen and support such, but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavour to minister of that grace to them.

5. To be patient toward all men, ver. 14. We must bear and forbear. We must be long-suffering, and suppress our anger, if it begins to rise upon the apprehension of affronts or injuries; at least we must not fail to moderate our anger, and this duty must be exercised towards all men, good and bad, high and low, &c. We must not be high in our expectations and demands, nor harsh in our resentments, nor hard in our impositions, but endeavour to make the best we can of every thing, and think the best we can of every body.

6. Not to render evil for evil to any man, ver. 15. This we must look to, and be very careful about, i. e. we must by all means forbear to revenge ourselves; if others do us an injury, that will not justify us in returning it, in doing the same, or the like, or any other injury to them. It becomes us to forgive, as those that are, and that hope to be forgiven of God.

7. Ever to follow that which is good, ver. 15. i. e. In the general we must study to what is our duty, and pleading to God in all circumstances, whether men do us good turns or ill turns; whatever men do to us, we must do good to others. We must always endeavour to be beneficent and instrumental to promote the welfare of others, both among ourselves, in the first place to them that are of the household of faith, and then as we have opportunity unto all men, Gal. vi. 10.

16. Rejoice evermore. 17. Pray without ceasing. 18. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19. Quench not the Spirit. 20. Despise not prophesyings. 21. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. 22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Here we have divers short exhortations, that will not burden our memories, but will be of great use to direct the motions of our hearts and lives: for

the duties are of great importance : and we may observe how they are connected together, and have a dependence upon one another.

1. *Rejoice evermore*, ver. 16. This must be understood of *spiritual joy* : For we must *rejoice* in our creature-comforts, as if we *rejoiced not*, and must not expect to live many years, and *rejoice in them all* ; but if we do *rejoice in God*, we may do that *evermore*. In him our joy will be full ; and it is our fault if we have not a *continual feast*. If we are sorrowful upon any worldly account, yet still we may *always rejoice*, 2 Cor. vi. 10. Note, A religious life is a pleasant life, it is a life of constant joy.

2. *Pray without ceasing*, ver. 17. Note, The way to rejoice evermore, is to pray without ceasing. We should *rejoice more*, if we did *pray more*. We should keep up *stated times* for prayer, and *continue instant* in prayer. Pray always, and *not faint* : pray without weariness, and continue in prayer, till we come to that world, where prayer shall be swallowed up in praise. The meaning is not, that men should do nothing but pray, but that nothing else we do should hinder prayer in its proper season. Prayer will help forward, and not hinder all other lawful business, and every good work.

3. *In every thing give thanks*, ver. 18. And if we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving, *in every thing* : As we must in every thing make our requests known to God by supplications, so we must not omit thanksgiving, Phil. iv. 6. We should be thankful in *every condition*, even in adversity as well as prosperity. It is never so bad with us, but it might be worse. If we have never so much occasion to make our humble complaints to God, we never can have any reason to complain of God, and have always much reason to praise and give thanks ; and the apostle saith, this is the *will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning us, that we do give thanks*, i. e. seeing God is reconciled to us in Christ Jesus ; in him and through him, and for his sake, he alloweth us to rejoice evermore, and appoint us in every thing to give thanks. It is pleasing to God.

4. *Quench not the Spirit*, ver. 19. For it is this Spirit of grace and supplication, that *helpeth our infirmities*, that assisteth us in our prayer and thanksgivings. Christians are said to be *baptised with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*. He worketh as fire, by enlightening and enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench his holy fire. As fire is put out by *withdrawing fuel* ; so we quench the Spirit, if we do not stir up our spirits, and all that is within us, to comply with the motions of the good Spirit ; and as fire is quenched by *pouring water*, or putting a great quantity of dirt upon it, so we must be careful not to quench the holy Spirit, by *indulging to carnal lusts*, and affections, or minding only earthly things.

5. *Despise not prophesyings*, ver. 20. For if we neglect the *means of grace*, we forfeit the *Spirit of grace*. By *prophesyings* here we are to understand the *preaching of the word* ; the interpretation and applying of the scriptures ; and this we must not *despise*, but should prize and value, because it is the ordinance of God, appointed of him for our furtherance and increase in knowledge and grace, and holiness and comfort. We must not despise preaching, though it be plain, and not with enticing words of men's wisdom, and though we are told no more than what we knew before. It is useful, and many times needful, to have our minds stirred up, our affections and resolutions excited to these things, that we knew before to be our interest and our duty.

6. *Prove all things, but hold fast that which is good*, ver. 21. That is a needful caution to prove all things : for though we must put a value on preaching, we must not take things upon trust from the preacher, but try them by the *law and the testimony*. We must search the scriptures, whether what they say be true or not. We must not believe every spirit, but must try the spirits : But we must not be always trying, always unsettled ; no, at length we must be settled, and *hold fast that which is good*. When we are satisfied, that any thing is right and true, and good, we must hold it fast, and not let it go, whatever opposition or whatever persecution we meet with for the sake thereof. Note, The doctrines of human infallibility, and implicit faith, and blind obedience, are not the doctrines of the Bible. Every Christian hath, and ought to have, the judgment of discretion, and should have his senses exercised in the discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood, Heb. v. 13, 14. And proving all things, must be in order to the holding fast that which is good. We must not always be seekers, or fluctuating in our minds, like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

7. *Abstain from all appearance of evil*, ver. 22. And this is a good means to prevent our being deceived with false doctrines, or unsettled in our faith ; for our Saviour hath told us, John vii. 17. *If a man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*. Corrupt affections indulged in the heart, and evil practices allowed of in the life, will greatly tend to promote fatal errors in the mind : Whereas purity of heart, and integrity of life, will dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it. We should therefore abstain from evil, and all appearances of evil, from sin, and that which looks like sin, and that leads to it, and borders upon it. He that is not shy of the appearances of sin, and who shows not the occasions of sin, and who avoids not the temptations and approaches to sin, will not long abstain from the actual commission of sin.

23. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly : and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 25. Brethren, pray for us. 26. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. 28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

These words conclude this epistle. In which observe,

(1.) Paul's prayer for them, ver. 23. He had told them in the beginning of this epistle, he always made mention of them in his prayers ; and now he is writing to them, he listeth up his heart to God in prayer for them. Take notice,

1. To whom the apostle prays, namely, *The very God of peace*. He is the God of grace, and the God of peace and love : He is the author of peace and lover of concord ; and by their peaceableness and unity, from God as the author, those things would best be obtained which he prays for.

2. The things he prays for on behalf of the Thessalonians are, their sanctification, that *God would sanctify them wholly* ; and their preservation, that *they might be preserved blameless*. He prays they may be *wholly sanctified*, i. e. that the whole man might be sanctified ; and then that the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, might be *preserved* : or, he prays, that they might be *wholly sanctified*, i. e. more perfectly, for the best are sanctified but in part, while in this world ; and therefore, we should pray for and press towards complete sanctification. And where the good work of grace is begun, it shall be carried on, be protected and preserved, and all those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus shall be preserved to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And because, if God did not carry on his good work in the soul, that would miscarry ; we should pray to God to perfect his work, and preserve us blameless, i. e. free from sin and impurity, till at length we are presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.

(2.) His comfortable assurance, that God would hear his prayer. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it, ver. 24. The kindness and love of God had appeared to them in calling them to the knowledge of his truth, and the faithfulness of God was their security, that they should persevere to the end ; and therefore the apostle assures them, God would do what he desired ; he would effect what he had promised ; he would accomplish all the good pleasure of his goodness towards them. Note, That our fidelity to God depends upon his faithfulness to us.

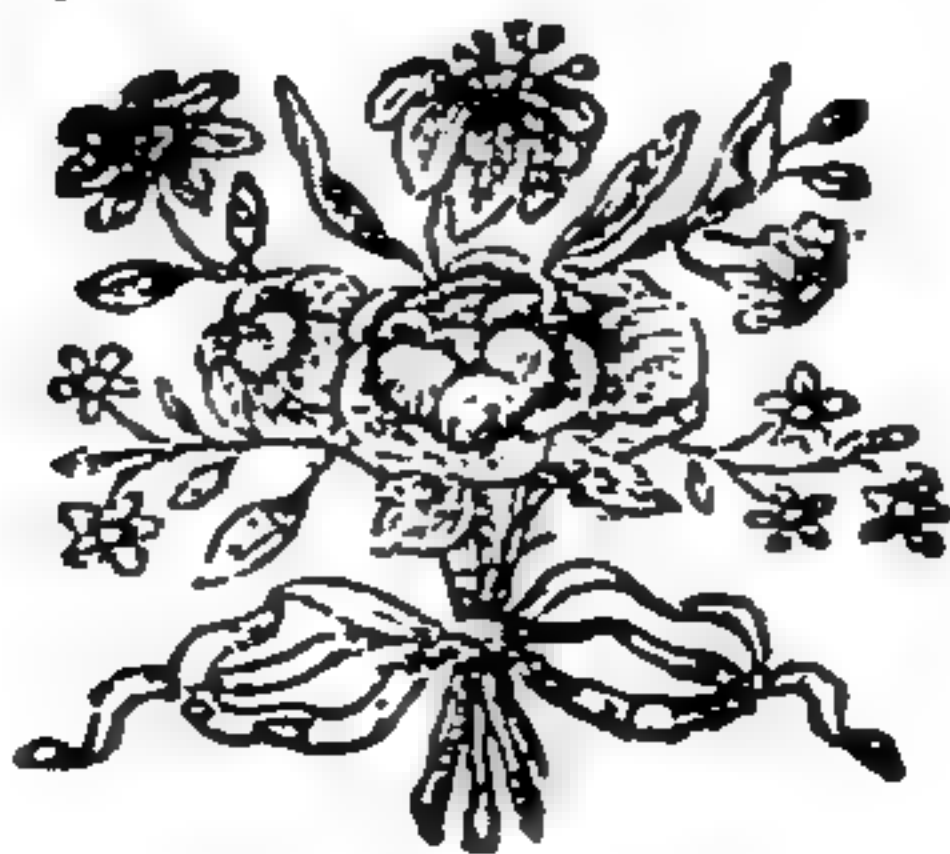
(3.) His request of their prayers : Brethren, pray for us, ver. 25. We should pray for one another ; and brethren should thus express brotherly love. This great apostle did not think it beneath him to call the Thessalonians brethren, nor below him to request their prayers. Ministers stand in need of their peoples prayers ; and the more people do pray for their ministers, the more good ministers may have from God, and the people may receive by their ministry.

(4.) His salutation : Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss, ver. 26. Thus the apostle sends a friendly salutation from himself, and Silvanus and Timothy ; and would have them salute each other in their names : and thus he would have them signify their mutual love and affection to one another by the kiss of charity, 1 Pet. v. 14. which is here called an *holy kiss*, to intimate how cautious they should be of all impurity in the use of this ceremony, then commonly practised ; as it should not be a treacherous kiss like that of Judas, so not a lascivious kiss like that of the harlot, Prov. vii. 14.

(5.) His solemn charge for the reading this epistle, ver. 27. This is not only an exhortation, but an adjuration by the Lord. And this epistle was to be read to all the holy brethren. It is not only allowed to the common people to read the scriptures, and what none should prohibit, but it is their indispensable duty, and what they should be persuaded to do. And in order to this, these holy oracles should not be kept concealed in an unknown tongue, but translated into the vulgar languages ; that all men being concerned to know the scriptures, they all may be able to read them, and be acquainted with them. The public reading of the law was one part of the worship of the sabbath among the Jews in their synagogues, and the scriptures should be read in the public assemblies of Christians also.

(6.) The apostolical benediction that is usual in other epistles : The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen, ver. 28. We need no more to make us happy, than to know that grace which our Lord Jesus Christ hath manifested, and be interested in that grace he hath purchased, and partake of that grace that dwells in him as the head of the church. This is an ever-flowing and over-flowing fountain of grace to supply all our wants.

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
 WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
 OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF
St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

By Mr. D. Mayo

THIS Second Epistle was written soon after the former, and seems to be designed to prevent their running into a mistake, which might arise from some passages in the former Epistle, concerning the Second coming of Christ; as if it were near at hand. The apostle in this Epistle is careful to prevent any wrong use, some among them might make of those expressions of his, that were agreeable to the dialect of the prophets of the Old Testament; and informeth them that there were many intermediate counsels yet to be fulfilled before that day of the Lord shall come, though, because it is sure, he had spoken of it as near. There are other things he writeth about for their consolation under sufferings, and exhortation and direction in duty.

C H A P. I.

After the introduction, ver. 1, 2. the apostle begins this epistle with an account of his high esteem for these Thessalonians, ver. 3, 4. He then comforteth them under their afflictions and persecutions, ver. 5—10. And tells them what his prayers were to God for them, ver. 11, 12.

1. **PAUL**, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2. Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth: 4. So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and tribulations that ye endure.

Here we have,

(1.) The introduction, ver. 1, 2. in the same words as in the former epistle. From whence we may observe, That as this apostle did not count it grievous to him to write the same things (Phil. iii. 1.) in his epistles, that he had delivered in preaching; so he willingly wrote the same things to one church as he did to another. And here the same words in the second epistle as in the former, sheweth us, that ministers ought not so much to regard the variety of expression and elegance of style, as the truth and usefulness of the doctrines they preach: and great care should be taken lest from an affectation of novelty in method and phrases, we advance new notions or doctrines contrary to the principles of natural or revealed religion, upon which this church of the Thessalonians was builded, as all true churches are; namely, in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2.) The high esteem this apostle had for them. He not only had a great affection for them, as he had expressed in his former epistle, and now again in his pious wish of grace and peace for them; but he also expresseth his great esteem for them. Concerning which observe,

1. How his esteem of them is expressed, viz.

(1.) He glorified God on their behalf. *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet*, ver. 3. He chooseth rather to speak of what was praise-worthy in them in a way of thanksgiving to God, than by commendation of them; and as what he mentions was matter of his rejoicing, he accounted it matter of thanksgiving, and it was meet or fit it should be so; for we are bound, and it is our duty to be thankful to God for all the good that is found in us or others: and it not only is an act of kindness to our fellow-Christians, but our duty to thank God on their behalf.

(2.) He also glories in them before the churches of God, ver. 4. The apostle never flattered his friends, but he took pleasure in commending them, and speaking well of them to the glory of God, and for the excitement and encouragement of others. Paul did not glory in his own gifts, nor his labour among them, but he gloried in the grace of God which was bestowed upon them, and so his glorying was good; because all the commendation he gave to them, and the pleasure he took himself, centered in the praise and glory of God.

2. For what he esteemed them and thanked God, viz. the increase of their faith, and love, and patience. In his former epistle, chap. i. 3. he gave thanks for their faith, and love, and patience; here he giveth thanks for the increase of all those graces, that they were not only true Christians, but growing Christians. Note, That where there is the truth of grace, there will be increase of it. The path of the just is the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And where there is the increase of grace, God must have all the glory of it. We are as much indebted to him for the improvement of grace, and the progress of that good work, as we are for the first work of grace, and the very beginning of it. We may be tempted to think, that though when we were bad, we could not make ourselves good, yet when we are good we can easily make ourselves better; but we have as much dependance on the grace of God for the increasing the grace we have, as for the planting of grace when we had it not. The matter of the apostle's thanksgiving and glorying on behalf of the Thessalonians, was,

1. That their faith did grow exceedingly, ver. 3. They were more confirmed in the truth of gospel-revelations, and confided in gospel-promises, and had lively expectations of another world. The growth of their faith appeared by the works of faith; and where faith groweth, all other graces grow proportionably.

2. Their charity abounded, ver. 3. i. e. their love to God and man. Note, Where faith groweth, love will abound, for faith worketh by love: and not only the charity of some few of them, but of every one to each other, did abound. There were no such divisions among them as in some other churches.

3. Their patience as well as faith did increase in all their persecutions and tribulations. And then patience hath its perfect work, when it extendeth itself to all trials. There were many persecutions which the Thessalonians endured for the sake of righteousness, as well as other troubles which they met with in this calamitous life; yet they endured all these, by faith seeing him that is invisible, and looking to the recompense of reward; and endured them with patience, not with an insensibility under them, but with patient bearing them, and that from Christian principles, which kept them quiet and submissive, and afforded them inward strength and support.

5. Which is a manifest token to the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7. And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. 10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Having mentioned their persecutions and tribulations, which they endured principally for the cause of Christ, the apostle proceedeth to offer several things for their comfort under them: As,

(1.) He tells them of the present happiness and advantage of their sufferings, ver. 5. Their faith being thus tried, and patience exercised, were improved by their sufferings, inasmuch that they were counted worthy of the kingdom of God. Their sufferings were a manifest token of this, that they were worthy or meet to be accounted Christians indeed, seeing they could suffer for Christianity. And the truth is, Religion, if it is worth any thing, is worth every thing; and those either have no religion at all, or none that is worth having, or know not how to value it, that cannot find in their hearts to suffer for it. Besides, from their patient suffering, it appeared that according to the righteous judgment of God, they should be counted worthy of the heavenly glory: not by worthiness of condignity, but of congruity only; not that they could merit heaven, but were made meet for heaven. We cannot by all our sufferings, any more than by our services, merit heaven as a debt; but by our patience under our sufferings, we are qualified for the joy that is promised to patient sufferers in the cause of God.

(2.) He tells them next of the future recompense that shall be given to persecutors, and persecuted, viz.

1. There will be a punishment inflicted on persecutors. God will recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, ver. 6. And there is nothing that doth more infallibly mark a man for eternal ruin, than a spirit of persecution, and enmity to the name and people of God; as the faith and patience and constancy of the saints is to them an earnest of everlasting rest and joy, so the pride and malice and wickedness of their persecutors, is to them an earnest of everlasting misery: for every man carries about with him, and carries out of the world with him, either his heaven or his hell: God will render a recompense, and will trouble them that trouble his people. This he has done sometimes in this world, witness the dreadful end of many persecutors; but especially this he will do in the other world, where the portion of the wicked must be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

2. There is a reward for them that are persecuted; God will recompense their trouble with rest, ver. 7. There is a rest that remains for the people of God; a rest from sin and sorrow. Though many may be the troubles of the righteous now, yet God will deliver them out of them all. The future rest will abundantly recompense all their present troubles. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. There is enough in heaven, to countervail all that we may lose or suffer for the name of Christ, in this world. The apostle saith, To you that are troubled rest with us. In heaven ministers and people shall rest together, and rejoice together, who suffer together here; and the meanest Christian shall rest with the greatest apostle: Nay, what is far more, if we suffer for Christ, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. Concerning this future recompense we are further to observe,

First, The certainty of it, proved by the righteousness and justice of God. It is a righteous thing with God, ver. 6. to render to every man according to his works. And the thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men and persecutors, and the great support of the righteous, and such as are persecuted: For seeing there is a righteous God, there will be a righteous recompense, and God's suffering people shall lose nothing by their sufferings, and their enemies will gain nothing by their advantages against them.

Secondly,

Secondly, The time when this righteous recompense shall be made, viz. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, ver. 7. That will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; for then will God judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed, even Jesus Christ the righteous judge. The righteousness of God doth not visibly appear unto all men in the procedure of his providence, as it will in the process of the great judgment-day. This scripture hath made known to us the judgment to come, and we are bound to receive the revelation here given concerning Christ. As,

1. That the Lord Jesus will in that day appear from heaven. Now the heavens retain him, they conceal him; but then he will be revealed and made manifest: He will come in all the pomp and power of the upper world, from whence we look for the Saviour.

2. He will be revealed with his mighty angels, ver. 7. or the angels of his power; These will attend upon him to grace the solemnity of that great day of his appearance; they will be the ministers of his justice and mercy in that day; they will summon the criminals to his tribunal, and gather in the elect, and be employed in executing his sentence.

3. He will come in flaming fire, ver. 8. A fire goeth before him that shall consume his enemies. The earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. This will be a trying fire to every man's works, a refining fire to purify the saints, who shall share in the purity, and partake of the felicity of the new heaven and the new earth: a consuming fire to the wicked. His light will be piercing, and his power consuming to all those who in that day shall be found as chaff.

4. The effects of this appearance will be terrible to some, and joyful to others.

(1.) They will be terrible to some; for he will then take vengeance on the wicked.

1. On those that have sinned against the principles of natural religion, and rebelled against the light of nature; that know not God, ver. 8. Though the invisible things of him are manifested in the things that are seen.

2. On those that rebel against the light of revelation, who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. This is the great crime of multitudes, the gospel is revealed to them, and they will not believe it; or if they pretend to believe it, they will not obey it. Note, the believing the truths of the gospel is in order to our obeying the precepts of the gospel: There must be the obedience of faith. To such persons as are here mentioned, the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ will be terrible, because of their doom which is mentioned, ver. 9. Where observe,

1. They will then be punished. Though sinners may be long reprieved, yet they will be punished at last. Their misery will be a proper punishment for their crimes, and only what they have deserved. They did sin's work, and must receive sin's wages.

2. Their punishment will be no less than destruction, not of their being, but of their bliss; not that of the body alone, but both as to body and soul.

3. This destruction will be everlasting. They shall be always dying, and yet never die. Their misery will run parallel with the line of eternity. The chains of darkness are everlasting chains, and the fire everlasting fire. It must needs be so, since the punishment is inflicted by an eternal God, fastening upon an immortal soul, set out of the reach of divine mercy and grace.

4. This destruction shall come from the presence of the Lord, i. e. immediately from God himself. Here God punisheth sinners by creatures, by instruments; but then he will take the work into his own hands. It will be destruction from the Almighty, more terrible than the consuming fire which consumed Nadab and Abihu, which came from before the Lord.

5. It shall come from the glory of his power, or from his glorious power. Not only the justice of God, but his almighty power will be glorified in the destruction of sinners; and who knows the power of his anger? He is able to cast into hell.

(2.) It will be a joyful day to some, even to the saints, unto them that do believe and obey the gospel. And then the apostle's testimony concerning this day, will be confirmed and believed, ver. 10. In that bright and blessed day.

1. Christ Jesus will be glorified and admired by his saints: They shall behold his glory, and admire it with pleasure; they will glorify his grace, and admire the wonders of his power and goodness towards them, and sing hallelujahs to him in that day of his triumph, for their complete victory and happiness.

2. Christ will be glorified and admired in them. His grace and power will then be manifested and magnified, when it shall appear what he hath purchased for, and wrought in, and bestowed upon all those that believe in him: As his wrath and power will be made known in and by the destruction of his enemies; so his grace and power will be magnified in the salvation of his saints. Note, Christ's dealings with those that believe, will be what the world one day shall wonder at. Now, they are a wonder to many: But how will they be wondered at in this great and glorious day; or rather how will Christ, whose name is wonderful, be admired when the mystery of God shall be finished? Christ will not be so much admired in the glorious esteem of angels, that he will bring from heaven with him; as in the many saints, the many sons he will bring to glory.

11. Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In these verses the apostle again tells the Thessalonians of his earnest and constant prayer for them: He could not be present with them; yet he had a constant remembrance of them; they were much upon his thoughts, and he wished them well, and could not express his good will and good wishes to them, better than in earnest constant prayer of God for them: Wherefore also we pray, &c. Note, The believing thoughts and expectations of the second coming of Christ should put us upon prayer to God for ourselves and others. We should watch and pray, so our Saviour directeth his disciples, Luke xi. 36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. Observe,

(1.) What the apostle prayed for, ver. 11. And it is a great concern to be well instructed what to pray for; and without divine instruction we know not what to pray for, as without divine assistance we shall not pray in such a manner as we ought. Our prayers should be suitable to our expectations. Thus the apostle prayeth for them,

1. That God would begin his good work of grace in them: so we may understand this expression: That our God would count you (or as it might be

read, make you) worthy of this calling. We are called with an high and holy calling; we are called to God's kingdom and glory; and no less than the inheritance of the saints is the hope of our calling, nothing less than the enjoyment of that glory and felicity which shall be revealed when Christ Jesus shall be revealed from heaven. Now, if this be our calling, our great concern should be to be worthy of it, or meet and prepared for his glory: And because we have no worthiness of our own, but what is owing purely to the grace of God, we should pray that he would make us worthy, and then count us worthy of this calling, or that he would make us meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12.

2. That God would carry on the good work that is begun; and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness. The good pleasure of God denoteth his gracious purposes towards his people, which flow from his goodness, and are full of goodness towards them; and it is from thence, that all good doth come to us. If there be any good in us, it is the fruit of God's goodness to us, is it owing to the good pleasure of his goodness, and therefore is called grace. Now, there are various and manifold purposes of grace and good-will in God towards his people; and the apostle prays that all of them may be fulfilled or accomplished towards these Thessalonians. There are several good works of grace begun in the hearts of God's people which proceed from this good pleasure of God's goodness, and we should desire that they may be completed and perfected. In particular the apostle prayeth, that God would fulfil in them the work of faith with power. Note, 1. The fulfilling the work of faith, is in order to the fulfilling of every other good work. And, 2. It is the power of God, that not only begins, but that carrieth on and perfecteth the work of faith.

(2.) Why the apostle prayeth for these things, ver. 12. viz. That the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified; and this is the end we should aim at in every thing we do and desire, that God and Christ in all things may be glorified: Our own and others happiness should be subordinate unto this ultimate end, our good works should so shine before men, that others may glorify God, that Christ may be glorified in and by us, and then we shall be glorified in and with him. And this is the great end and design of the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, which is manifested to us and wrought in us; or thus, it is according to the grace of God and Christ, i. e. It is an agreeable thing, considering the grace that is manifested to us, and bestowed on us by God and Christ, that we direct all we do to the glory of our Creator and Redeemer.

CHAP. II.

The apostle is very careful to hinder the spreading of an error which some among them had fallen into, concerning the coming of Christ, as being very near, ver. 1, 2, 3. Then he proceedeth to confute this error he cautioned them against, by telling them of two great events that were antecedent to the coming of Christ, viz. A general apostasy, and the revelation of antichrist, concerning whom the apostle tells them many remarkable things about his name, his character, and his rise, and his fall, and his reign, and the sin and ruin of his subjects, ver. 3—12. He then comforts them against the terror of this apostasy, and exhorts them to steadfastness, ver. 13—15. And concludeth with a prayer for them, ver. 16, 17.

1. NOW we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3. Let no men deceive you by any means:—

From these words it appeareth, that some among the Thessalonians had mistaken the apostle's meaning, in what he had written in his former epistle about the coming of Christ, by thinking it was near at hand; that Christ was just ready to appear, and come to judgment; Or it may be, some among them pretended, that they had the knowledge of this by particular revelation from the Spirit, or else from some words they had heard from the apostle, when he was with them, or some letter he had written, or they pretended he had written to them or some other person: And hereupon the apostle is careful to rectify the mistake, and to prevent the spreading of this error. Observe, If errors and mistakes arise among Christians, we should take the first opportunity to rectify them, and hinder the spreading thereof; and good men will be especially careful to suppress errors, that may arise from a mistake of their words and actions, though that which was spoken or done was never so innocent or well. We have a subtle adversary, who watcheth all opportunities to do mischief, and will sometime promote errors even by means of the words of scripture. Observe,

(1.) How very earnest and solicitous this apostle was to prevent mistakes, We beseech you, brethren, &c. ver. 1. He intreats them as brethren, who might have charged them, as a father chargeth his children: He sheweth great kindness and condescension; and insinuateth himself into their affections: And this is the best way to deal with men, when we would preserve or recover them from errors, to deal gently and lovingly with them; rough and rigorous treatment will but exasperate their spirits, and prejudice them against the reasons we may offer. He obtests, and even conjureth them in the most solemn manner, By the coming of Christ, &c. The words are in the form of an oath, and his meaning is, that if they believed Christ would come, and if they desired he would come, and rejoiced in the hope of his coming, they should be careful to avoid the error, and the evil consequence thereof, that he was now cautioning them against. From this form of obtestation used by the apostle, we may observe,

1. That it is most certain, that the Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world, that he will come in all the pomp and power of the upper world in the last day, to execute judgment upon all. Whatever uncertainty we are at, or whatever mistakes may arise about the time of his coming, his coming itself is certain. This hath been the faith and hope of all Christians in all ages of the church; nay, it was the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints, ever since Enoch the seventh from Adam, who said, Behold, the Lord cometh, &c. Jude ver. 14.

2. At the second coming of Christ, all the saints will be gathered together to him; and this mention of the gathering of the saints together unto Christ at his coming, sheweth, that the apostle speaketh of Christ's coming to judgment at the last day, and not of his coming to destroy Jerusalem. He speaketh of a proper, and not a metaphorical advent; and as it will be part of Christ's honour in that day, so it will be the completing of the happiness of his saints.

(1.) That they all shall be gathered together. There will then be a general meeting of all the saints, and none but saints; all the Old Testament saints that got acquaintance with Christ by the dark shadows of the laws, and saw his day at a distance; and all the New Testament saints, to whom

life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel: They will all be gathered together. There will then come from the four winds of heaven, all that are, or ever were, or ever shall be, from the beginning to the end of time. All shall be gathered together.

(2.) That they shall be gathered together in Christ. He will be the great centre of their unity. They shall be gathered together to him to be attendants on him, to be assessors with him, to be presented by him to the Father, to be with him for ever, and altogether happy in his presence to all eternity.

3. The doctrine of Christ's coming, and our gathering together to him, is of great moment and importance to Christians, otherwise it would not be the proper matter of the apostle's obtestation. We ought therefore not only to believe these things, but highly to account of them also, and look upon them as things we are greatly concerned in, and should be much affected with.

(2.) The thing itself the apostle cautions the Thessalonians against is, that they should not be deceived about the time of Christ's coming, and so be shaken in mind, or be troubled. Note, That errors in the mind tend greatly to weaken our faith, and cause us trouble; and such as are weak in faith and of troubled minds, are oftentimes apt to be deceived, and fall a prey to seducers.

2. The apostle would not have them be deceived. *Let no man deceive you by any means*, ver. 3. There are many that lie in wait to deceive, and they have many ways of deceiving; we have reason therefore to be cautious and stand upon our guard. Some deceivers will pretend new revelations, and others misinterpret scripture, and others will be guilty of gross forgeries; divers means and artifices of deceit men will use, but we must be careful that no man deceive us by any means. The particular matter in which the apostle cautions them not to be deceived, is about the near approach of Christ's coming, as if it was to have been in the apostle's days; and as harmless as this error might have seemed to many, yet because it was indeed an error, it would have proved of bad consequence to many persons. Therefore,

2. He giveth them warning, and would not have them soon shaken in mind, or be troubled.

1. He would not have their faith weakened. We should firmly believe the second coming of Christ, and be settled and established in the faith of this; but there was danger lest the Thessalonians, if they apprehended the coming of Christ was just at hand, upon the finding they, or others whom they too much regarded, were mistaken as to the time, should thereupon question the truth or certainty of the thing itself; whereas they ought not to waver in their minds, as to this great thing, which is the faith and hope of all the saints. False doctrines are like the winds that toss the water to and fro, and they are apt to unsettle the minds of men, who are sometimes as unstable as water. Then,

2. He would not have their comforts lessened, that they should not be troubled or affrighted with false alarms. It is likely the coming of Christ was represented in so much terror, as to trouble many serious Christians among them; though in itself it should be matter of the believer's hope and joy; or else many might be troubled with the thoughts how surprising this day would be, or with the fear of their unpreparedness, or upon the reflection on their mistake about the time of Christ's coming; we should always watch and pray, but must not be discouraged, nor uncomfortable at the thoughts of Christ's coming.

3.—For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: 4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6. And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. 7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8. And then shall that wicked—be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9. Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, 10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

In these words the apostle consuteth the error he had cautioned them against, and giveth the reasons why they should not expect the coming of Christ as just at hand. There were several events previous to the second coming of Christ; in particular he tells them,

(1.) There would be a general apostasy, there would come a falling away first, ver. 3. By this apostasy we are not to understand a defection in the state or from civil government, but in spiritual or religious matters, from sound doctrine, and instituted worship and church-government, and a holy life. The apostle speaks of some very great apostasy, which would be very general, and not only of some converted Jews or Gentiles, but such as should be very general, though gradual, and what would give occasion to the revelation or rise of antichrist, that man of sin. This he tells them, ver. 5. he had told them of when he was with them, with design, no doubt, that they should not take offence or be stumbled at it. And let us observe, that no sooner was Christianity planted and rooted in the world, but there began to be a defection in the Christian church. It was so in the Old Testament church; presently after any considerable advance made in religion there followed a defection; soon after the promise there was revolting e. g. soon after that men began to call upon the name of the Lord, all flesh corrupted their way; soon after the covenant with Noah, the Babel-builders bid defiance to heaven; soon after the covenant with Abraham, his seed degenerated in Egypt: Soon after the Israelites were planted in Canaan, when the first generation was worn off, they forsook God and served Baal: Soon after God's covenant with David, his seed revolted and served other gods: Soon after the return out of captivity, there was a general decay of

piety, as appeareth by the story of Ezra and Nehemiah; and therefore it was no strange thing, that after the planting of Christianity there should come a falling away.

(2.) There would be a revelation of that man of sin, ver. 3. i. e. antichrist would take his rise from this general apostasy. The apostle afterwards speaketh of the revelation of that wicked one, ver. 8. intimating the discovery which should be made of his wickedness, in order to his ruin: Here he seemeth to speak of his rise, which should be occasioned by that general apostasy he had mentioned; and seemed to intimate, that all sorts of false doctrines and corruptions should centre in him. Great disputes have been; who or what is intended by this man of sin and son of perdition; and if it is not certain that the papal power and tyranny is principally or only intended, yet this is plain, what is here said doth very exactly agree thereto. For observe,

1. The names of this person, or rather the state and power here spoken of: He is called the man of sin, to denote his egregious wickedness: not only is he addicted to, and practiseth wickedness himself, but he doth also promote, and countenance, and command sin and wickedness in others; and he is the son of perdition, because he himself is devoted to certain destruction, and is the instrument of destroying many others both in soul and body. These names may properly be applied, for these reasons, to the papal state; and thereto agree also,

2. The characters here given, ver. 4. viz.

(1.) That he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; and thus have the Bishops of Rome not only opposed God's authority, and that of the civil magistrate, who are called god's, but have exalted themselves above God, and earthly governors, in demanding greater regard to their commands than to the commands of God or the magistrate.

(2.) As God, he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God: As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now; so the antichrist here mentioned, is some usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims divine honours; and to whom can this better agree than to the Bishops of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given, as "*Dominus Deus noster Papa*." Our Lord God the Pope; "*Deus alter in terra*," another God on earth; "*Idem est dominum Dei & Papae*," the dominion of God and the Pope is the same.

3. His rise is mentioned, ver. 6, 7. Concerning which, we are to observe two things:

(1.) That there was something that did not hinder or withhold, or did let until it was taken away. This is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not think fit to mention more plainly at that time: and it is notorious that while this power continued, that prevented the advances of the bishops of Rome to that height of tyranny, which soon afterwards they arrived to.

(2.) That this mystery of iniquity was gradually to arrive to its height; and so it was in effect, that the universal corruption of doctrine and worship in the Romish church did come in by degrees, and the usurpation of the Bishops of Rome was gradual, not all at once; and thus the mystery of iniquity did the more easily, and almost insensibly prevail. The apostle justly calls it a mystery of iniquity, because wicked designs and actions were concealed under false shews and pretences, at least they were concealed from the common views and observation: By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced; and by a pretended zeal for God and his glory, bigotry and persecution were promoted. And he tells us this mystery of iniquity did even then begin, or did already work; while the apostles were yet living, the enemy came and sowed tares; there were then the deeds of the Nicolaitans, persons that pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him. Pride and ambition, and worldly interest of church pastors and church rulers, as in Diotrephes, and others, were the early working of the mystery of iniquity, which, by degrees, came to that prodigious height, as hath been visible in the church of Rome.

4. The fall or ruin of the antichristian state is declared, ver. 8. The head of this antichristian kingdom, is called that wicked one, or that lawless person who sets up a human power in competition with, and contradiction to the divine dominion and power of the Lord Jesus Christ: but as he would thus manifest himself to be the man of sin, so the revelation or discovery of this to the world would be the sure preface and the means of his ruin. The apostle doth assure the Thessalonians the Lord would consume and destroy him, the consuming him precedeth his final destruction, and that is by the Spirit of his mouth, by his word of command; the pure word of God accompanied with the Spirit of God, will discover this mystery of iniquity, and make the power of antichrist to consume and waste away; and in due time it shall be totally and finally destroyed, and this will be by the brightness of Christ's coming. Note, The coming of Christ to destroy the wicked, will be with peculiar glory and eminent lustre and brightness.

5. The apostle further describeth the reign and rule of this man of sin. Where we are to observe,

(1.) The manner of his coming or ruling, and working. In the general, that is after the example of Satan, the grand enemy of souls, the great adversary of God and man. He is the great patron of error and lies, the sworn enemy of the truth as it is in Jesus, and all the faithful followers of Jesus. More particularly it is with fanatical power and deceit: a divine power is pretended for the support of this kingdom, but it is only after the working of Satan; signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; by these the papal kingdom was first set up, and hath all along been kept up, but they have false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles that have served their cause, things false in act, or fraudulently managed, to impose upon the people: and the diabolical deceptions are notorious with which the antichristian-state hath been supported. The apostle calls it all deceivableness of unrighteousness, ver. 10. Others may call them pious frauds, but the apostle called them unrighteous and wicked frauds; and indeed all fraud, which is contrary to truth, is an impious thing. Many are the subtle artifices the man of sin hath used, and various are the plausible pretences by which he hath beguiled unwary and unstable souls to embrace false doctrines, and submit to his usurped dominion.

(2.) The persons are described, who are his willing subjects, or most likely to become such, ver. 10. They are such as love not the truth, that they may be saved. They heard the truth, it may be, but they did not like it or love it; they could not bear sound doctrine, and therefore easily imbibed false doctrines; they had some notional knowledge of what was true, but they indulged some powerful prejudices, and so became a prey to seducers; had they loved the truth, they would have persevered in it, and been preserved by it; but no wonder if they easily parted with what they never had any love to: And of these persons it is said, that they perish, or are lost; they are in a lost condition, and in danger to be lost for ever. For,

6. We have the sin and ruin of the subjects of antichrist's kingdom declared, ver. 11, 12.

(1.) Their sin is this: They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness: They did not love the truth, and therefore they did not believe it; and because they did not believe the truth, therefore they had

pleasure in unrighteousness, or in wicked actions, and were pleased with false notions. Note, An erroneous mind and vicious life do often go together, and help forward one another.

(2.) Their ruin is thus expressed, *God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie*. Thus he will punish men for their unbelief, and for their dislike of the truth, and love to sin and wickedness; not that God is the author of sin, but in righteousness he sometimes withdraws his grace from such sinners as are here mentioned: He giveth them over to Satan, or leaveth them to be deluded by his instruments; he giveth them up to *their own hearts lusts*, and leaveth them to themselves, and then sin will follow of course: yea, the worst of wickedness, that shall end at last in eternal damnation. And God is just when he inflicts spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter upon such who have no love to the truths of the gospel, who will not believe them, nor live suitably to them, but indulge false doctrines in their minds, and wicked practices in their lives and conversations.

13. But we are bound to give thank always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: 14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Here observe,

(1.) The consolation the Thessalonians might take against the terrors of this apostasy, ver. 13, 14. For they were *chosen to salvation*, and called to the obtaining of glory. Note, When we hear of the apostasy of many, it is matter of great comfort and joy, that there is a remnant according to the election of grace, that do and shall persevere; and especially we should rejoice, if we have reason to hope that we are of that number. The apostle reckoned himself bound in duty to be thankful to God on this account; *we are bound to give thanks to God always for you*. He had often given thanks on their behalf, and he is still abounding in thanksgiving for them; and there was good reason, because they were *beloved by the Lord*, as appeared in this matter, their security from apostatizing. And this preservation of the saints is owing.

1. To the stability of the election of grace, ver. 13. And therefore were they *beloved of the Lord*, because God had *chosen them from the beginning*: He had loved them with an eternal and everlasting love. Concerning this election of God, we may observe, (1.) The eternal date thereof, it is from the beginning; not the beginning of the gospel, but the beginning of the world, before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4. Then, (2.) The end to which they were chosen; and that is salvation, complete and eternal salvation from sin and misery, and the full fruition of all good. (3.) The means in order to obtaining this end; namely, *sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*. The decree of election therefore connecteth the end and the means, and these must not be separated. We are not elected of God, *because we were holy*, but *that we might be holy*. Being chosen of God, we must not live as we list; but if we are chosen to *salvation as the end*, we must be prepared for it by *sanctification*, as the necessary means to obtain that end; which sanctification is by the operation of the *Holy Spirit* as the author, and by *faith* on our part. There must be the belief of the truth, without which there can be no true sanctification, nor perseverance in grace, nor obtaining salvation. Faith and holiness must be joined together, as well as holiness and happiness; therefore our Saviour prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail, Luke xxii. 32. and for his disciples, John xvii. 17. Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.

2. To the efficacy of the gospel-call, ver. 14. As they were chosen to salvation, so they were *called thereunto by the gospel*. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, Rom. viii. 30. The outward call of God is by the gospel; and this is rendered effectual by the inward operation of the Spirit. Note, Wherever the gospel comes, it calls and inviteth men to the obtaining of glory; it is a call to honour and happiness, even the *glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*; i. e. the glory he hath purchased, and the glory he is possessed of, to be communicated unto them that believe in him and obey his gospel: Such shall be with Christ to *behold his glory*, and they shall be glorified with Christ, and partake of his glory. Hereupon there followeth,

(2.) An exhortation to steadfastness and perseverance. *Therefore, brethren, stand fast*, ver. 15. Observe, He doth not say ye are chosen to salvation, and therefore ye may be careless and secure; but *therefore stand fast*. God's grace in our election and vocation is so far from superseding our diligent care and endeavour, that it should quicken and engage us to the greatest resolution and diligence. So the apostle John having told them he wrote unto, that they had received the anointing which should abide in them, and that they should abide in him, [in Christ] subjoineth this exhortation, *Now abide in him*, 1 John ii. 27, 28. The Thessalonians are exhorted to steadfastness in their Christian profession, or to *hold fast the traditions which they had been taught*, i. e. the doctrine of the gospel, which had been delivered by the apostle, by word or epistle. As yet the canon of scripture was not complete, and therefore some things were delivered by the apostles in their preaching, under the conduct of the infallible Spirit which Christians were bound to observe as coming from God; other things were afterwards by them committed to writing, as the apostle had written a former epistle to these Thessalonians; and these epistles were written, as the writers were moved by the *Holy Ghost*. Note, There is no argument from hence for regarding oral traditions in our days, now the canon of scripture is complete, as of equal authority with the sacred writings. Such doctrines and duties as were taught by the inspired apostles, we must steadfastly adhere to; but we have no certain evidence of any thing delivered by them, more than what we find contained in the holy scriptures.

16. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through grace, 17. Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

In these words we have the apostle's earnest prayer for them; in which observe,

(1.) To whom he prayeth, namely, to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father. We may and should direct our prayers, not only to God the Father, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; but also unto our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and should pray in his name unto God not only as his Father, but as our Father in and through him.

(2.) From what he taketh encouragement in his prayer, namely, from the consideration of what God had already done for him and them; *Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through grace*, ver. 16. Where observe, 1. The love of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; our election, vocation, justification, and salvation, is all owing to the love of God in Christ Jesus. 2. From this fountain in particular doth all our consolation flow. And the consolation of saints is an everlasting consolation. The comforts of the saints are not dying things; they shall not die with them: The spiritual consolations God giveth, none shall deprive them of; and God will not take them away; because he loveth them with an everlasting love, therefore they shall have everlasting consolations. 3. Their consolation is founded on the hope of eternal life. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and are not only patient, but joyful in tribulations; and there is good reason for these strong consolations, because the saints have *good hope*: Their hope is grounded on the love of God, and the promise of God, and the experience they have had of the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God, and it is good hope through grace; the free grace and mercy of God is what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, and not on any worth or merit of their own.

(3.) What is it that he asketh of God for them: That he would comfort their hearts, and establish them in every good word and work, ver. 17. God had given them consolations, and he prayeth that they might have more abundant consolation. There was good hope, through grace, they should be preserved, and he prayeth they might be established; and it is observable how comfort and establishment are here joined together. Note therefore, 1. That comfort is a means of establishment; for the more pleasure we take in the word, and work, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. And, 2. Our establishment in the ways of God, is a likely means in order to comfort; whereas if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, or if we are halting and faltering in our duty, no wonder if we are strangers to the pleasures and joys of religion. What is it that lieth at the bottom of all our uneasiness, but our unsteadiness in religion? We must be established in every good word and work, in the word of truth and the work of righteousness: And Christ must be honoured by our good works and good words; and they who are sincere will endeavour to do both, and in so doing they may hope for comfort and establishment, till at length our holiness and our happiness be completed.

C H A P. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter the apostle had prayed earnestly for the Thessalonians, and now he desireth their prayers, encouraging them to trust in God, to which he subjoins another petition for them, ver. 1—5. He then proceedeth to give them commands and directions for the correcting some things he was informed were amiss among them, ver. 6—15. And concluded with benedictions and prayers, ver. 16—18.

1. FINALLY brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you; 2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. 3. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 4. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the things which we command you. 5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

In these words observe,

(1.) The apostle desires the prayers of his friends, *Finally brethren, pray for us*, ver. 1. He always remembered them in his prayers, and would not have them forget him and his fellow-labourers, but bear them on their hearts, at the throne of grace. Note, 1. This is one way by which the communion of saints is kept up, not only by their praying together, or with one another, but by their praying for one another, when they are absent one from another. And thus they that are at a great distance may meet together at the throne of grace; and thus they that are not capable of doing or receiving any other kindness, may yet this way do and receive real and very great kindness. 2. It is the duty of people to pray for their ministers, and not only for their own pastors, but also for all good and faithful ministers. And, 3. Ministers need, and therefore should desire the prayers of their people. How remarkable is the humility, and how engaging the example of this great apostle, who was so mighty in prayer himself, and yet despised not the prayers of the meanest Christian, but desired an interest in them. Observe further, What they are desired and directed to pray for; namely,

1. For the success of the gospel ministry: *That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*, ver. 1. This was the great thing that blessed Paul was most solicitous about. He was more solicitous that God's name might be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done, than he was about his own daily bread. He desired the word of the Lord might run; so it is in the original, i. e. that it might get ground, that the interest of religion in the world might go forward and not backward; and not only go forward, but go apace. All the forces of hell were then, and still are, more or less, raised and mustered to oppose the word of the Lord, to hinder its publication and success; we should pray therefore, that oppositions may be removed, that so the gospel may have free course to the ears, and to the hearts and consciences of men, that it may be glorified in the conviction and conversion of sinners, the confutation of gainsayers, and the holy conversation of the saints. God, who *magnified the law, and made it honourable* will glorify the gospel and make that honourable, and so will glorify his own name. And good ministers and good Christians may very well be contented to be little, to be any thing, to be nothing, if Christ be magnified and his gospel be glorified. Paul was now at Athens, or, as some think, at Corinth, and would have the Thessalonians pray that he might have its good success there, as he had at Thessalonica, that it might be as well with others, even as it was with them. Note, If ministers had been successful in one place, they should desire to be successful in every place where they may preach the gospel.

2. For the safety of gospel ministers. He doth not ask their prayers for preferment, but for preservation, that we may *be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men*, ver. 2. Note, that they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel, and persecutors of the faithful preachers of it, are *unreasonable and wicked men*. The act against all the rules and laws of reason and religion, and are guilty of the greatest absurdity and impiety. Not only in the principles of atheism and infidelity, but also in the practice of vice and immorality.

immorality, and especially in persecution, there is the greatest *absurdity* in the world, as well as *impiety*. There is need of the spiritual protection, as well as the assistance of godly and faithful ministers, for these are as the standard-bearers that are most struck at; and therefore all that wish well to the interest of Christ in the world should pray for them: *For all men have not faith*, i. e. many do not believe the gospel; they will not embrace it themselves, and no wonder if such are restless and malicious in their endeavours to oppose the gospel, decry the ministry, and disgrace the ministers of the word; and too many have not common faith or honesty; there is no confidence that we can safely put in them, and we should pray to be delivered from such who have no conscience nor honour, who never regard what they say or do. We may sometimes be in as much or more danger from false and pretended friends, as from open and avowed enemies.

(2.) He encourageth them to trust in God. We should not only pray to God for his grace, but also place our trust and confidence in his grace, and humbly expect what we pray for. Observe,

1. What the good is which we may expect from the grace of God, viz. Establishment and preservation from evil; and the best Christians stand in need of these benefits: 1. That God would *establish them*. This the apostle had prayed for on their behalf, *chap. ii. 17.* and now he doth encourage them to expect this favour; and we stand no longer than God holds us up; unless he *holds up our goings in his paths, our feet will slide*, and we shall fall. 2. That God will *keep them from evil*. We have as much need of the grace of God for our perseverance to the end, as for the beginning of the good work. The *evil of sin* is the greatest evil, but there are other evils God will also preserve his saints from, the evil that is in the world, yea from all evil to his heavenly kingdom.

2. What encouragement we have to depend upon the grace of God. The Lord is faithful. He is faithful to his promises; and the Lord who cannot lie, who will not alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth. When once the promise therefore is made, performance is sure and certain. He is faithful to his relation, a faithful God, and a faithful friend; we may depend upon his filling up all the relations he stands in to his people. Let it be our care to be true and faithful in our promises, and to the relations we stand in to this faithful God. He adds,

3. A further ground of hope that God would do this for them, seeing they *did and could do the things they were commanded*, ver. 4. The apostle had this confidence in them, and that was founded upon his confidence in God; for there is otherwise no confidence in man. Their obedience is described by doing what he and his fellow-labourers had commanded them; which was no other thing than the *commandments of the Lord*: For the apostles themselves had no further commission than to teach men to *observe and to do what the Lord had commanded*, Matt. xxviii. 20. And as the experience the apostle had of their obedience for the time past, was one ground of his confidence that they would do the things commanded them for the time to come; so this is one ground to hope, that *whatsoever we ask of God we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*, 1 John iii. 22.

(3.) He maketh a short prayer for them, ver. 5. It is a prayer for spiritual blessings. Two things of the greatest importance the apostle prayeth for. 1. That their hearts might be *brought into the love of God*, i. e. to be in love with God as the most excellent and amiable being, the best of all beings; and this is not only most reasonable and necessary in order to our happiness, but is our happiness itself. It is a great part of the happiness of heaven itself, where this love shall be made perfect. And we can never attain to this, unless God by his grace *direct our hearts aright*, for our love is apt to go astray after other beings. Note, We sustain a great deal of damage by the misplacing our affections; it is our sin and our misery that we misplace our affections upon wrong objects. And if God direct our love aright upon himself, the rest of the affections will thereby be rectified. 2. That a *patient waiting for Christ* might be joined with this love of God. There is no true love of God without faith in Jesus Christ; we must wait for Christ, which supposeth our faith in him, that we believe he came once in flesh, and will come again in glory. And we must expect this second coming of Christ, and be careful to get ready for it. There must be a *patient waiting*, enduring with courage and constancy all that we may meet with in the mean time: And we have need of patience, and need of divine grace to exercise Christian patience, the *patience of Christ*, (as some read the word) i. e. patience for Christ's sake and after Christ's example.

6. Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, 8. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. 10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. 12. Now them that are such, we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. 13. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. 14. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

The apostle having commended their obedience for the time past, and mentioned his confidence in their obedience for the time to come, proceedeth to give them commands and directions to some that were faulty, correcting some things that were amiss among them. Observe, That the best society of Christians may have some faulty persons among them, and some things that ought to be reformed. Perfection is not to be found on this side heaven; evil manners beget good laws; the disorders that Paul was informed to be among the Thessalonians, occasioned the good laws we find in these verses, that are of constant use to us and all others whom they may concern. Observe,

(1.) That which was amiss among the Thessalonians, which is expressed,

1. More generally; there were some that *walked disorderly, not after the tradition they received from the apostle*, ver. 6. Some of the brethren were guilty of this disorderly walking, i. e. they did not live regularly, nor govern themselves according to the rules of Christianity, nor agreeably to their profession of religion; not according to the precepts delivered by the apostle, which they had received, and pretended to pay a regard unto. Note, It is required of those who have received the gospel, and profess a subjection to it, that they live according to the gospel: If they do not, they are to be counted disorderly persons. 2. In particular there were among them some *idle persons and busy-bodies*, ver. 11. This the apostle was so credibly informed of, that he had sufficient reason to give commands and directions with relation to such persons, how they ought to behave, and how the church should carry it towards them.

1. There were some among them that were idle, *not working at all, or doing nothing*. It doth not appear that they were gluttons, or drunkards, but idle, and therefore disorderly people. It is not enough for any to say they do no hurt; for it is required of all persons that they do good, in the places and relations providence hath placed them. It is probable these persons had a notion (by misunderstanding some passages in the former epistle) concerning the near approach of the coming of Christ, which served them for a pretence to leave off the work of their callings, and live in idleness. Note, It is a great error, or abuse of religion, to make it a cloke for idleness, or any other sin. If we were sure that the day of judgment were never so near, we must notwithstanding do the work of the day in its day, that when our Lord cometh *he may find us so doing*. The servant that waiteth for the coming of his Lord aright, must be working as his Lord hath commanded, that all may be ready when he cometh. Or it may be, these disorderly persons pretended that the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, discharged them from the services and business of their particular callings and employments in the world: whereas they were to *abide in the same calling wherein they were called of God, and therein abide with God*, 1 Cor. vii. 20, 24. Industry in our particular callings as men, is a duty required of us by our general calling as Christians; or perhaps the general charity that was then among Christians to their poor brethren, encouraged some to live in idleness, as knowing the church would maintain them: whatever was the cause, they were much to blame.

2. There were *busy-bodies* among them: And it should seem, by the connexion, that the same persons who were idle, were busy bodies also. This may seem to be a contradiction, but so it is that most commonly such persons as have no business of their own to do, or who neglect that, do busy themselves in other mens matters: If we are idle, the devil and a corrupt heart will soon find us somewhat to do. The mind of man is a busy thing; if it be not employed in doing good, it will be doing evil. Note, Busy-bodies are disorderly walkers, i. e. such as are guilty of vain curiosity, and impertinent meddling with things that do not concern them, and troubling themselves and others with other mens matters. The apostle warns Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 13. to beware of such *who learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and are not only idlers but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking the things which they ought not*.

(2.) The good laws which were occasioned by these evil manners. Concerning which we may take notice,

1. *Whose laws they are*. They are commands of the apostles of our Lord, given in the name of their Lord and ours, i. e. the commands of our Lord himself. *We command you brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 6. Again, *we command and exhort you by our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 12. The apostle useth words of authority and intreaty; and where disorders are to be rectified or prevented, there is need of both. The authority of Christ should awe our minds unto obedience, and his grace and goodness should allure us.

2. *What the good laws and rules are*. The apostle giveth directions to the whole church, and commands to those disorderly persons, and an exhortation to those in particular who did well among them.

1. His commands and directions to the whole church, regard. (1.) Their behaviour towards the disorderly persons that were among them; which is thus expressed, ver. 6. *to withdraw themselves from such, and afterwards to mark that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet not to count him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother*. The directions of the apostle are carefully to be observed in this matter, how we are to carry it to disorderly persons. We must be very cautious in church-censures and church-discipline. We must, 1. Note, That man who is suspected or charged with not obeying the word of God, or walking contrary thereto, i. e. we must have sufficient proof of his fault before we proceed further. We must, 2. *Admonish him in a friendly manner*; we must put him in mind of his sin, and of his duty; and this should be done privately, Matt. xviii. 17. Then if he will not hear, we must, 3. *Withdraw from him, and not company with him*, i. e. we must avoid familiar converse and society with such, for two reasons, namely, that we may not learn his evil ways: for he that followeth vain and idle persons and keepeth company with such, is in danger of becoming like them. And another reason is, for the shaming, and for the reforming them that offend: that when idle and disorderly persons see how their loose practices are disliked by all wise and good people, they may be ashamed of them, and walk more orderly. Love therefore to the persons of our offending brethren, even when we hate their vices, should be the motive even of our withdrawing from them; and even those that are under the censures of the church, must not be accounted as enemies, ver. 15. for if they be reclaimed and reformed by these censures, they will recover their credit and comfort, and right to church privileges as a brother. (2.) Their general conduct and behaviour ought to be according to the good example the apostle and those which were with him had given them; *Yourselves know how ye ought to follow us*, ver. 7. Those that planted religion among them had set a good example before them; and the ministers of the gospel should be ensamples to the flock. And it is the duty of Christians not only to walk according to the traditions of the apostles, and the doctrines they preached, but also according to the good example they set before them: *To be followers of them, so far as they were followers of Christ*. The particular good example the apostle mentions was their diligence, that was so different from that which was found in those disorderly walkers he takes notice of: *We behaved not ourselves disorderly among you*, ver. 7. i. e. we did not spend our time idly, in idle visits, idle talk, idle sports. They took pains in their ministry, in preaching the gospel, and in getting their own living. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought*, ver. 8. Though he might justly have demanded a maintenance, because they that preach the gospel may of right expect to live by the gospel. This is a just debt that people owe to their ministers, and the apostle had power or authority to have demanded this, ver. 9. but he waved his right from affection to them, and for the sake of the gospel, and that he might be an example for them to follow, ver. 10. that they might learn how to fill up time, and always be employed in somewhat that would turn to good account.

2. He commands and directs those that lived idle lives, to reform and set themselves to their business. He had given commandments to this purpose, as well as a good example of this, when he was among them; *Even when*

we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat, ver. 10. It was a proverbial speech among the Jews, *He that doth not labour, doth not deserve to eat.* The labourer is worthy of his meat, but what is the loiterer worthy of? It is the will of God every man should have a calling, and mind his calling, and make a business of it, and not live like useless drones in the world. Such persons do what in them lieth to defeat the sentence. *In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat thy bread.* It was not only the humour of the apostle, who was an active stirring man himself, and therefore would have every body else to be so too, but it was the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that with quietness we work, and eat our own bread, ver. 12.* Men ought some way or other to earn their own living, otherwise they do not eat their own bread. Observe, There must be work or labour in opposition to idleness, and there must be quietness in opposition to being busy-bodies in other men's matters. We must study to be quiet and do our own business. This is an excellent but rare composition, to be of an active yet quiet spirit; active in our own business, and yet quiet as to other people's.

3. He exhorteth *those that did well, not to be weary in well-doing, ver. 13, q. d. go on and prosper.* The Lord is with you while you are with him. See that whatever you do that is good, you persevere therein. Hold on your way, and hold out to the end. You must never give over, nor tire in your work. It will be time enough to rest when you come to heaven, *that everlasting rest that remains for the people of God.*

16. Now the Lord of Peace himself give you peace always, by all means, *The Lord be with you all.* 17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write: 18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all.* Amen.

In this conclusion of the epistle we have the apostle's benediction and prayers for these Thessalonians. Let us desire them for ourselves and our friends. There are three blessings pronounced upon them, or desired for them.

(1.) That God would give them peace. Note, 1. *Peace* is the blessing pronounced or desired, and by peace we may understand all manner of

prosperity: Here it may signify in particular peace with God: peace in their own minds and consciences; peace among themselves, and peace with all men. 2. This peace is desired for them always, or in every thing; and he desired they might have all good things at all times. 3. Peace by all means: That as they enjoyed the means of grace, they might with success use all the means and methods of peace too; for peace is often difficult, as it is always desirable. 4. That God would give them peace, who is the Lord of peace. And if we have any peace that is desirable, God must give it, who is the *author of peace and lover of concord.* We shall neither have peaceable dispositions ourselves, nor find men disposed to be at peace with us, unless the God of peace give us both.

(2.) That the presence of God might be with them, *The Lord be with you all.* And we need nothing more to make us safe and happy, nor can we desire any thing better for ourselves and our friends, than to have God's gracious presence with us and them. This will be a guide and a guard in every way that we may go, and our comfort in every condition we may be in. It is the presence of God that maketh heaven to be heaven, and that will make this earth to be like to heaven. No matter where we are if God be with us, nor who is absent if God be present with us.

(3.) That the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ might be with them.* So this apostle concludeth his first epistle to these Thessalonians; and it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may comfortably hope to have peace with God, and enjoy the presence of God, for he hath made them *nigh that were afar off:* It is this grace that is all in all to make us happy: This is what the apostle admired and magnified on all occasions, what he delighted and trusted in; and by this salutation or benediction, written with his own hand, as the *token of every epistle,* (when the rest was written by an amanuensis) he took care lest the churches he wrote unto should be imposed on by counterfeit epistles, which he knew would be of dangerous consequence.

Let us be thankful that we have the canon of scripture complete, and by the wonderful and special care of divine providence preserved pure and uncorrupt through so many successive ages; and not dare to add to it nor diminish from it: Let us believe the divine original of the sacred scriptures, and conform our faith and practice to this our sufficient and only rule, *which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Amen.

THE END OF THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF St. PAUL to TIMOTHY.

HITHERTO Paul's Epistles were directed to churches, now follow some to particular persons; two to Timothy, one to Titus, and another to Philemon; all three ministers: Timothy and Titus were evangelists, an inferior order to the apostles, as appears by that, Eph. iv. 11 *Some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists.* Their commission and work was much the same with that of the apostles, to plant churches, and water the churches that were planted, and accordingly they were itinerants, as we find Timothy was. Timothy was first converted by Paul, and therefore he calls him his *own son in the faith*; we read of his conversion, Acts xvi. 23. The scope of these two Epistles is, to direct Timothy how to discharge his office as an evangelist at Ephesus, where he now was, and where Paul ordered him for some time to reside, to perfect the good work which he had begun there. As for the ordinary pastoral charge of that church, he had very solemnly committed it to the presbytery, as appears from Acts xx. 17. where he charges the presbyters *to feed the flock of God, which he had purchased with his own blood.*

C H A P. I.

After the inscription in ver. 1, 2. we have, 1. *The charge given to Timothy, ver. 3, 4.* 2. *The true end of the law, ver. 5—12. where he shews it is entirely agreeable to the gospel.* 3. *He mentions his own call to be an apostle: for which he expresses his thankfulness, ver. 12—16.* 4. *His doxology, ver. 17.* 5. *A renewal of the charge to Timothy, ver. 18.* And of Hymeneus and Alexander, ver. 19, 20.

1. PAUL an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is our hope*; 2. Unto Timothy, *my own son in the faith*: grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. 4. Neither give heed to fables, and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith: *so do*:

Here is, 1. The inscription of the epistle; from whom it is sent, *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ*; constituted an apostle by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ. His credentials were unquestionable; he had not only a commission, but a commandment, not only from God our Saviour, but from Jesus Christ: He was a preacher of the gospel of Christ, and a minister of the kingdom of Christ. Observe, God is our Saviour, *Jesus Christ, which is our hope.* Observe, Jesus Christ is a Christian's hope; our hope is in him, all our hope of eternal life is built upon him; Christ

is in us the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. He calls Timothy his *own son*, because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because he had been a son that served him; served with him in the gospel, Phil. ii. 22. Timothy had not been wanting in the duty and observance of a son to Paul, and Paul was not wanting in the care and tenderness of a father to him.

2. The benediction is, *grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father.* Some have observed, that whereas in all the epistles to the churches, the apostolical benediction is *grace and peace*; in these two epistles to Timothy, and that of Titus, it is *grace, mercy, and peace*: As if ministers had more need of God's mercy than other men. Ministers need more grace than others to discharge their duty faithfully, and they need more mercy than others to pardon what is amiss in them: and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit?

3. Paul tells Timothy what was the end of his appointing him to this office: I besought thee to abide at Ephesus. Timothy had a mind to have gone with Paul, was loth to go from under his wing, but Paul would have it so, it was necessary for the public service, *I besought thee*, said he: Though he might assume an authority to command him, yet for love's sake he chose rather to beseech him. Now his business was, to take care to fix both the ministers and the people of that church. *Charge them that they teach no other doctrine* than what they have received, i. e. that they do not add to the Christian doctrine, under pretence of improving it, or making up the defects of it; that they do not alter it, but stick to it as it was delivered to them. Observe, 1. Ministers must not only be charged to preach the true doctrine of the gospel, but charged to preach no other doctrine: *If an angel from heaven preached any other doctrine, he was an anathema,* Gal. i. 8.

Observe, 2. That in the times of the apostles there were attempts made to corrupt Christianity; we are not as many that corrupt the word, 2 Cor. ii. 17. otherwise this charge to Timothy might have been spared. 3. He must

must not only see to it, that he did not preach any other doctrines, but he must charge others that they might not add any thing of their own unto the gospel, or take any thing from it, but that they preach it pure and uncorrupt. He must also take care to prevent their regarding *fables and endless genealogies* and striles of words. This is often repeated in these two epistles, as chap. iv. 7.—vi. 4. 2 Tim. ii. 23. as well as in the epistle to Titus. As among the Jews there were some that brought Judaism into Christianity; so among the Gentiles there were some that brought Paganism into Christianity. Take heed of those, saith he, watch against them, it will be the corrupting and ruining of religion among you, for *these minister questions rather than edifying*. Observe, That that which ministers questions is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for doubtful disputes pulls down the church rather than builds it up. And I think by a parity of reason, every thing else that ministers questions rather than godly edifying, should be disclaimed and disregarded by us, such as an uninterrupted succession in the ministry from the apostles down to these times, the absolute necessity of episcopal ordination, and the intention of the minister to the efficacy and validity of the sacraments he administers, &c. These are as bad as Jewish fables and endless genealogies, for they involve us in inextricable difficulties, and tend only to shake the foundations of a Christian's hope, and to fill his mind with perplexing doubts and fears. Observe here, That godly edifying should be the end ministers should aim at in all their discourses, that Christians may be improving in godliness, and growing up to a greater likeness to the blessed God. Observe further, That godly edifying must be in faith: the gospel is the foundation on which we build, and it is by faith that we come to God at first, Heb. xi. 6. And it must be in the same way, and by the same principle of faith that we must be edified. Again, ministers should avoid as much as may be, what will occasion disputes, and would do well to insist on the great and practical point of religion, about which there can be no disputes; for even disputes about great and necessary truths, draw off the mind from the main design of Christianity, and eat out the vitals of religion, which consist in practice and obedience, as well as in faith, that we may not hold the truth in unrighteousness, but may keep the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

5. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 6. From which some having swerved, have turned aside into vain jangling. 7. Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. 8. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9. Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers. 10. For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, 11. According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Here the apostle instructs Timothy how to guard against the Judaizing teachers, or others that mingled fables and endless genealogies with the gospel. He shews the use of the law, and the glory of the gospel.

(1.) He shews the end and use of the law: It is intended to promote love, for love is the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 10.

1. The end of the commandment is charity, or love, Rom. xiii. 8. The main scope and drift of the divine law is to engage us to the love of God and one another; and whatever tends to weaken either our love to God, or love to the brethren, tends to defeat the end of the commandment; and surely the gospel that obliges us to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, &c. Matt. v. 44. does not design to lay aside or supersede a commandment, the end whereof is love, so far from it, that on the other side we are told, that though we had all advantages, and wanted charity, we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling symbol, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another, John xiii. 35. Those therefore who boasted of their knowledge of the law, but used it only as a colour for the disturbance that they gave to the preaching of the gospel, under pretence of zeal for the law, dividing the church, and distracting it; they defeated that which was the very end of the commandment, and that is love; love out of a pure heart, a heart purified by faith, purified from corrupt affections. In order to the keeping up of holy love, our hearts must be cleansed from all sinful love, love out of a good conscience kept without offence. Those that are careful to keep a good conscience from a real belief of the truth of the word of God, which doth enjoin it, here called, a faith unfeigned; those answer the end of the commandment.

Here we have the concomitants of that excellent grace charity, they are three. 1. A pure heart, there it must be seated, and from thence it must take its rise. 2. A good conscience, which we must exercise ourselves daily in, that we may not only get it, but that we may keep it, Acts xxiv. 15. 3. Faith unfeigned must also accompany it, for it is love without dissimulation, the faith that works by it must be of the like nature, genuine and sincere. Now some that set up for teachers of the law swerved from the very end of the commandment: Set up for disputers, but their disputes proved vain jangling; set up for teachers, but they pretended to teach others what they themselves did not understand. If the church be corrupted by such teachers, we must not think it strange, for we see from the beginning it was so.

Observe, 1. When persons, especially ministers, swerve from the great law of charity, the end of the commandment, they will turn aside to vain jangling; when a man misses his end and scope, it is no wonder every step he takes is out of the way. 2. Jangling, specially in religion, is vain, it is unprofitable and useless as to all that is good, and it is very pernicious and hurtful; and yet many peoples religion consists of little else but vain jangling. 3. Those who deal much in vain jangling are fond and ambitious to be teachers of others, they desire, that is, they affect the office of teaching. 4. It is too common for men to intrude into the office of the ministry, when they are very ignorant of those things about which they are to speak; they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm, and by such learned ignorance, no doubt, they edify their hearers very much!

2. The use of the law, ver. 8. the law is good if a man use it lawfully. The Jews used it unlawfully, as an engine to divide the church, an umbrage to the malicious opposition they made to the gospel of Christ; they set it up for justification, and so used it unlawfully. We must not therefore think

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to set aside, but use it lawfully, i. e. for the restraint of sin. The abuse which some have made of the law, does not take away the use of it; but when a divine appointment hath been abused, call it back to its right use, and take away the abuses, for the law is still very useful as a rule of life, though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, but yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty. It is not made for a righteous man, i. e. it is not made for those that do observe it, for if we could keep the law, righteousness would be by the law, Gal. iii. 21. but it is made for the wicked persons to restrain them, to check them, and to put a stop to vice and prophaneness. It is the grace of God that changes mens hearts, but the terrors of the law may be of use to tie their hands and restrain their tongues. A righteous man does not want those restraints, which are necessary for the wicked; or at least the law is not made primarily and principally for the righteous, but for sinners of all sorts, whether in a greater or lesser measure, ver. 9, 10. In this black roll of sinners, he particularly mentions breaches of the second table duties, which we owe to our neighbour, against the fifth and sixth commandments, murderers of fathers and mothers, and man-slayers; against the seventh, whoremongers and them that defile themselves with mankind; against the eighth, men-stealers; against the ninth, liars and perjured persons; and then he closes his account with this, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. Some understand this as an institution of a power in the civil magistrate to make laws against such notorious sinners as are instanced in, and to see those laws put in execution.

(2.) He shews the glory and grace of the gospel. Paul's epithets are expressive, significant, and many times every one is a sentence: As here, ver. 11. According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Let us learn from thence,

1. To call God the blessed God, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his own perfections.

2. To call the gospel the glorious gospel, for so it is: Much of the glory of God appears in the works of creation and providence, but much more in the gospel, where it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Paul reckoned it a great honour put upon him, and a great favour done him, that this glorious gospel was committed to his trust; i. e. the preaching of it; the framing of it is not committed to any man or company of man in the world. The settling of the terms of salvation in the gospel of Christ is God's own work, but the publishing of it to the world is committed to the apostles and ministers.

Note here, 1. The ministry is a trust, for the gospel was not committed unto this apostle; it is an office of trust as well as of power, and the former more than the latter; for this reason ministers are called stewards, 1 Cor. iv. 1. 2. It is a glorious trust, because the gospel committed to them is a glorious gospel; it is a trust of very great importance, God's glory is very much concerned in it. Lord! what a trust is committed to us! How much grace do we want to be found faithful in this great trust!

12. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; 14. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus: 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Here he returns thanks to Jesus Christ for putting him into the ministry. Observe,

1. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, Acts xxvi. 17. God condemned the false prophets among the Jews in these words, I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied, Jer. xxiii. 21. Ministers, properly speaking, cannot make ministers, much less can persons make themselves ministers; for it is Christ's work, as king and head, prophet and teacher of his Church.

2. Those whom he puts into the ministry he enables for it, whom he calls he qualifies; Those ministers that are no way fit for their work, nor have ability for it, are not of Christ's putting into the ministry, though there are different qualifications as to gifts and graces.

3. Christ gives not only ability but fidelity to those whom he puts into the ministry: He counted me faithful, and none are counted faithful, but those whom he makes so. Christ's ministers are trusty servants, and they ought to be so who have so great a trust committed to them.

4. A call to the ministry is a great favour, for which those that are so called ought to give thanks to Jesus Christ. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath put me into the ministry. Now the more to magnify the grace of Christ in putting him into the ministry, he gave an account of his conversion.

1. What he was before his conversion; A blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, Acts ix. 1. He made havock of the church, Acts viii.

3. A blasphemer of God, a persecutor of the saints, and injurious to both. Many times those that are designed for great and eminent services, are left to themselves before their conversion, to fall into great wickedness; that the mercy of God may be the more glorified in their remission, and the grace of God in their regeneration. The greatness of sin is no bar to our acceptance with God; no, not to our being employed for him, if it be truly repented of.

Observe here, 1. Blasphemy, persecution, and injuriousness, are very great and heinous sins, and those who are guilty of them are sinners before God exceedingly; to blaspheme God, is immediately and directly to strike at God; to persecute his people, is to endeavour to wound them through their sides; and to be injurious, is to be like Ishmael, whose hand was against every one, and every one was against him: For such invade God's prerogative, and inroach upon the liberties of their fellow-creatures. 2. True penitents, to serve a good purpose, will not be backward to own their former condition before they were brought home to God: This good apostle often confessed what his former life had been; as Acts xxii. 4, 26.—x. 11.

2. See the great favour of God to him; but I obtained mercy. This was a blessed but indeed; a great favour, that so notorious a rebel should find mercy with his prince. If Paul had persecuted the Christians wilfully,

knowing them to be the people of God, for ought I know, he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin; but because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief, he obtained mercy.

Note, 1. What we do ignorantly is a less crime than what we do knowingly: a sin of ignorance is a sin, for he that knew not his master's will, but did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes, *Luke xxii. 48.* Ignorance in some cases will extenuate a crime, though it do not take it away. 2. Unbelief is at the bottom of what sinners do ignorantly; they do not believe God's threatenings, otherwise they could not do as they do. 3. For these reasons St. Paul obtained mercy: *But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief.* 4. Here was mercy for a blasphemer, a persecutor, and for an injurious person; but I obtained mercy, I a blasphemer, &c.

Here he takes notice of the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, *ver. 14.* The conversion and salvation of great sinners is owing to the grace of Christ, his exceeding abundant grace, even that grace of Christ which appears in his glorious gospel, *ver. 15. This is a faithful saying, &c.* Here we have the sum of the whole gospel, *that Jesus Christ came into the world.* The son of God took upon him our nature, was made flesh and dwelt among us, *John i. 14.* He came into the world not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, *Matt. ix. 13.* His errand into the world was to seek and find, and to save them that were lost, *Luke xix. 10.* The ratification of this is, *That it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.* It is good news, worthy of all acceptance; and yet not too good to be true, for it is a faithful saying. It is a faithful saying, and therefore worthy to be embraced in the arms of faith: It is worthy of acceptance, and therefore to be received with holy love, which refers to the foregoing verse, where the grace of Christ is said to abound in faith and love. And in the close of the verse, Paul applies it to himself, *Of whom I am chief.* Paul was a sinner of the first rank; so he acknowledges himself to have been; for he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, &c. *Acts ix. 1, 2.* Persecutors are some of the worst of sinners: Such a one Paul had been; or, of whom I am a chief, i. e. of pardoned sinners: *I am chief.* It is an expression of his great humility, he that elsewhere calls himself the least of all saints, *Ephes. iii. 18.* here calls himself the chief of sinners.

Observe, 1. Christ Jesus is come into the world, the prophecies concerning his coming are now fulfilled. 2. He came to save sinners, he came to save those that could not save and help themselves. 3. Blasphemers and persecutors are the chief of sinners, so St. Paul reckoned them. 4. The chief of sinners may become the chief of saints; so this apostle was, for he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles, *2 Cor. xi. 5.* for Christ came to save the chief of sinners. 5. This is a very great truth, it is a faithful saying, these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on. 6. It deserves to be received, to be believed by all of us for our comfort and encouragement.

The mercy which Paul found with God, notwithstanding his great wickedness before his conversion he speaks of.

1. For the encouragement of others to repent and believe, *ver. 16. For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.* It was an instance of the long-suffering of Christ, that he would bear so much with one that had been so very provoking, and it was designed for a pattern to all others, that the greatest of sinners might not despair of mercy with God.

Note here, 1. Our apostle was one of the first great sinners converted to Christianity. 2. He was converted and obtained mercy for the sake of others as well as of himself, he was a pattern to others. 3. The Lord Jesus Christ shews great long-suffering in the conversion of great sinners. 4. Those that obtain mercy believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that without faith it is impossible to please God, *Heb. xi. 6.* 5. Those that believe on Christ, believe on him to life everlasting; they believe to the saving of the soul, *Heb. x. 39.*

2. He mentions it to the glory of God: having spoken of the mercy he had found with God, he could not go on with his letter, without inserting a thankful acknowledgment of God's goodness to him; *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Observe, 1. That grace which we have the comfort of, God must have the glory of. Those that are sensible of their obligations to the mercy and grace of God, will have their hearts enlarged in his praise: Here is praise ascribed to him as *the King eternal, immortal, invisible.* 2. When we have found God good, we must not forget to speak him great, and his kind thoughts of us must not at all abate our high thoughts of him, but rather increase them. God had taken particular cognizance of Paul, and shewed him mercy, and taken him into communion with himself, and yet he calls him *the King eternal, &c.* God's gracious dealings with us should fill us with admiration of his glorious attributes: He is eternal, without beginning of days or end of time: He is the ancient of days, *Dan. vii. 9.* He is immortal, and the original of immortality: He only hath immortality, *1 Tim. vi. 16.* for he cannot die; invisible, for he cannot be seen with mortal eyes, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see, *1 Tim. vi. 16. the only wise God, Jude 25.* He only is infinitely wise, and the fountain of all wisdom; *To him be glory for ever and ever, i. e.* Let me be for ever employed in giving honour and glory to him, as the thousands of thousands do, *Rev. v. 12, 13.*

18. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare, 19. Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck. 20. Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Here is the charge he gives to Timothy to proceed in his work with resolution, *ver. 18.* Observe here, The gospel is a charge committed to the ministers of it; it is committed to their trust to see that it be duly applied according to the intent and meaning of it, and the design of its great author. It seems that there had been prophecies before concerning Timothy, that he should be taken into the ministry, and should prove eminent in the work of the ministry, and this encouraged Paul to commit this charge to him.

Observe, 1. The ministry is a warfare, it is a good warfare against sin and Satan, and under the banner of the Lord Jesus, who is the captain of our salvation, *Heb. ii. 10.* and in his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in a particular manner engaged. 2. Ministers must war this good warfare, i. e. must execute their office diligently and courageously, notwithstanding their oppositions and discouragements. Note, 3. The prophecies which went before concerning Timothy, are here mentioned as a

motive to stir him up to a vigorous and conscientious discharge of his duty; so the good hopes that others have entertained concerning us should excite us to our duty; that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.

Ver. 19. Holding faith and a good conscience. Observe, That we must hold both faith and a good conscience, and those that put away a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions of a renewed enlightened conscience, and keep conscience void of offence, *Acts xxiv. 16.* a conscience not debauched by any vice or sin, and that will be a means of preserving us sound in the faith; and we must look to the one as well as the other, for the mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience, *2 Tim. iii. 9.* As for those that had made shipwreck of the faith, he instances in two, Hymeneus and Alexander, that had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession; and Paul had delivered them to Satan, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme, i. e. not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ, and the good ways of the Lord. Observe, The primary design of the highest censures in the primitive church, was to prevent further sin, and to reclaim the sinner: In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, *1 Cor. v. 5.*

Observe, 1. Those who love the service and work of Satan, are justly delivered over to the power of Satan, whom I have delivered to Satan. 2. God can, if he pleases, work by contraries; Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, when one would rather think, they would learn of Satan to blaspheme. 3. Those that have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted. 4. Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter, St. Paul treats, 1. Of prayer, with many reasons for it, *ver. 1—9.* 2. Of women's apparel, *ver. 9, 10.* 3. Of their subjection, with the reasons of it, *ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.* 4. A promise given for their encouragement in child-bearing, *ver. 15.*

1. **I** EXHORT therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: 2. For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour: 4. Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not,) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 8. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting:

Here is,

(1.) A charge given to Christians to pray for all men in general, and particularly for all in authority. Timothy must take care that this was done; Paul doth not send him any prescribed form of prayer, as we have reason to think he would, if he had intended that ministers should be tied to that way of praying; but in general, that they should make supplications and prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. Supplications, for the averting of evil; prayers for the obtaining of good; intercessions, for others, and thanksgivings for mercies already received. Paul thought it enough to give them general heads; they having the scripture to direct them in prayer, and the spirit of prayer poured out upon them, needed not any farther directions. Observe, The design of the Christian religion was to promote prayer; and the disciples of Christ must be praying people: *Pray always with all prayer, Ephes. vi. 18.* Prayers for ourselves in the first place, that is implied here; we must also pray for all men: for the world of mankind in general, for particular persons that need or desire our prayers. See how far the Christian religion was from being a sect when it taught men this disinterested charity; to pray, not only for those of their own way, but for all men. Pray for kings, *ver. 2.* though the kings at this time were heathens, enemies to Christianity, and persecutors of Christians, yet they must pray for them, because it is for the public good that there should be civil government, and proper persons intrusted with the administration of it, whom therefore we ought to pray for, yea, though we ourselves suffer under them. For kings, and all that are in authority, i. e. inferior magistrates; we must pray for them, and we must give thanks for them, pray for their welfare, and for the welfare of their kingdoms, and therefore must not plot against them, that in the peace thereof we may have peace and give thanks for them, and for the benefit we have under their government. That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Here see what we must desire for kings, that God will so turn their hearts and direct them, and make use of them, that we under them may lead a quiet and peaceable life. He doth not say that we may get preferments under them, grow rich, and be in honour and power under them; no, the top of the ambition of a good Christian is to lead a quiet and peaceable life, to get through the world unmolested in a low private station. We should desire that we and others may lead a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; implying that we cannot expect to be kept quiet and peaceable, unless we keep in all godliness and honesty. Let us mind our duty, and then we may expect to be taken under the protection both of God and the government. In all godliness and honesty: Here we have our duty as Christians summed up in two words; godliness, that is, the right worshipping of God; and honesty, that is, a good carriage towards all men. These two must go together; we are not truly honest if we be not godly, and do not render to God his due; and we are not truly godly except we be honest, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering.

Here we observe, 1. Christians are to be men much given to prayer, they ought to abound herein, and should use themselves to prayers, supplications, &c. 2. In our prayers we are to have a generous concern for others as well as for ourselves, we are to pray for all men, and to give thanks for all men; and must not confine our prayers or thanksgivings to our own persons or families. 3. Prayer consists of various parts, of supplications, intercessions and thanksgivings, for we must pray for the mercies we want, as well as be thankful

thankful for mercies already received, and we are to deprecate the judgments our own or other sins have deserved. 4. All men, yea kings themselves, and those that are in authority, are to be prayed for; they wait our prayers, for they have many difficulties to encounter, many snares to which their exalted stations expose them. 5. In praying for our governors, we take the most likely course to lead a peaceable and quiet life: The Jews at Babylon were commanded to seek the peace of the city, whither the Lord had caused them to be carried captives, and to pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof they should have peace, *Jer. xxix. 7.* 6. If we would lead a peaceable and quiet life, we must live in all godliness and honesty; we must do our duty to God and man: *He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it, 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.*

Now the reason he gives for this is, *because this is good in the sight of God our Saviour*; i. e. the gospel of Christ requires this. That which is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, we should do and abound in.

(2.) As a reason why we should in our prayers concern ourselves for all men, he shews God's love to mankind in general, *ver. 4.*

1. One reason why all men are to be prayed for is, because there is one God, and that God bears a good will to all mankind. There is one God, *ver. 5.* and one only, there is no other, there can be no other, for there can be but one infinite. This one God will have all men to be saved, i. e. he desires not the death and destruction of any, *Ezek. xxxiii.* but the welfare and salvation of all. Not that he hath decreed the salvation of all, for then all men would be saved; but he hath a good will to the salvation of all, and none perish but it is their own fault, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* He will have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, i. e. to be saved in the way that he hath appointed, and not otherwise. It concerns us to get the knowledge of the truth, because that is the way to be saved; *Christ is the way, and the truth, and so he is the life.*

2. There is one mediator, and that mediator gave himself a ransom for all: As the mercy of God extends itself to all his works, so the mediation of Christ extends itself thus far to all the children of men, that he paid a price sufficient for the salvation of all mankind; he brought mankind to stand upon new terms with God, so as that they are not now under the law as a covenant of works but as a rule of life, but under grace; not under the covenant of innocence, but under a new covenant, *he gave himself a ransom.* Observe, That the death of Christ was a ransom, a counter-price; we deserved to have died; Christ died for us to save us from death and hell: he gave himself a ransom voluntarily, a ransom for all; so that all mankind are put in a better condition than that of devils. He died to work out a common salvation; in order hereunto, to put himself into the office of mediator between God and man. A mediator supposes a controversy. Sin had made a quarrel between us and God; Jesus Christ is a mediator that undertakes to make peace, to bring God and man together, in the nature of an umpire or arbitrator, a days-man that lays his hand upon us both, *Joh. ix. 33.* He is a ransom that was to be testified in due time, i. e. in the Old Testament-times, his sufferings and the glory that should follow, were spoken of as things to be revealed in the last times, *1 Pet. i. 10, 11.* And they are accordingly revealed, by the same token that Paul himself was ordained a preacher and an apostle, to publish to the Gentiles the glad tidings of redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ. This doctrine of Christ's mediation Paul was intrusted to preach to every creature, *Mark xv. 16.* He was appointed to be a teacher of the Gentiles; besides his general call to the apostleship, he was commissioned particularly to preach to the Gentiles, in faith and truth, i. e. faithfully and truly.

Note, 1. It is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, that we pray for kings and for all men, and also, that we lead a peaceable and quiet life, &c. and this is a very good reason why we should do the one as well as the other. 2. God hath a good will to the salvation of all; so that it is not so much the want of a will in God to save them, as it is a want of will in themselves to be saved in God's way. Here our blessed Lord charges the fault; ye will not come unto me that ye may have life, *John v. 40.* I would have gathered you, and ye would not. 3. Those that are saved must come to the knowledge of the truth, for that is God's appointed way to save sinners; without knowledge the heart cannot be good, if we do not know the truth we cannot be ruled by it. 4. It is observable that the unity of God is asserted and joined with the unity of the mediator, and the church of Rome might as well maintain a plurality of gods, as a plurality of mediators. 5. He that is a mediator in the New Testament sense, gave himself a ransom. Vain then is the pretence of the Romanists, that there is but one mediator of satisfaction, but many of intercession; for, according to St. Paul, Christ's giving himself a ransom was a necessary part of the mediator's office; and indeed this lays the foundation for his intercession. 6. St. Paul was ordained a minister to declare this to the Gentiles, that Christ is the one mediator between God and man, who gave himself a ransom for all: This is the substance of which all ministers are to preach to the end of the world; and St. Paul magnified his office, as he was the apostle of the Gentiles, *Rom. xi. 13.* Lastly, Ministers must preach the truth, what they apprehend to be so, and they must believe it themselves; they are, like our apostle, to preach in faith and verity, and they must also be faithful and trusty.

3. A direction how to pray, *ver. 8.*

1. Now, under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where: no place amiss for prayer, no one place more acceptable to God than another, *John iv. 21.* Pray every where, i. e. we must pray in our closets, and pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or more private.

2. It is the will of God, that in prayer we should lift up holy hands: *lifting up holy hands,* or pure hands, pure from the pollution of sin, washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness: I will wash my hands, &c. *Psal. xxvi. 7.*

3. We must pray in charity; *without wrath,* or malice, or anger at any person.

4. We must pray in faith, *without doubting,* *Jam. i. 6.* or, as some read it, *without disputing*; and then it falls under the head of charity.

9. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15.

Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety.

Here is a charge, that women that profess the Christian religion should be modest and sober and silent and submissive, as becomes their place.

1. They must be very modest in their apparel, not affecting gaudiness or gaiety, or costliness; you may read the vanity of a person's mind by the gaiety and gaudiness of their habit, because they have better ornaments with which they should adorn themselves as become women professing godliness, with good works. Note, Good works are the best ornament, these are in the sight of God of great price. Those that profess godliness should, in their dress, as well as other things, carry it as becomes their profession; instead of laying out their money on fine clothes, they must lay it out in works of piety and charity, which are properly called good works.

2. Women must learn, learn the principles of their religion, learn Christ, learn the scriptures; they must not think that their sex excuses them from that learning which is necessary to salvation.

3. They must be silent and submissive, and subject, and not usurp authority: And the reason given is, because Adam was first formed, then Eve out of him, to denote her subordination to him and dependence upon him; and that she was made for him to be a help-met for him. And as she was lust in the creation, which is one reason for her subjection; so she was first in the transgression, and that is another reason. Adam was not deceived, i. e. not first; the serpent did not immediately set upon him, but the woman was first in the transgression, *2 Cor. xi. 3.* and it was part of the sentence, thy desire shall be to thine husband, and he shall rule over thee, *Gen. iii. 16.*

But it is a word of comfort, *ver. 15.* that they that continue in sobriety shall be saved in child-bearing, or with child-bearing: The Messiah, who was born of a woman, should break the serpent's head, *Gen. iii. 15:* on the sentence which they are under for sin, shall be no bar to their acceptance with Christ, *if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.*

Here we observe, 1. The extensiveness of the rules of Christianity; they not only reach to men, but women, not only to their persons, but also to their dress, which must be modest like their sex, and to their outward deportment and behaviour, it must be in silence, with all subjection. 2. Women are to profess godliness as well as men, for they are baptized, and thereby stand engaged to exercise themselves to godliness; and, to their honour be it spoken, many of them were eminent professors of Christianity in the days of the apostles, as the book of Acts will inform us. 3. Women being more in danger to exceed in their apparel, it was more necessary to caution them in this respect. 4. The best ornaments for professors of godliness are good works. 5. According to St. Paul, women must be learners, and are not allowed to be public teachers in the church: for teaching is an office of authority; whereas she must not usurp authority over the man, but is to be in silence: But notwithstanding this prohibition, good women may and ought to teach their children at home the principles of religion. Timothy from a child had known the holy scriptures; and who should teach him but his mother and grandmother? *2 Tim. iii. 15.* Aquila and his wife Priscilla expounded unto Apollos the way of God more perfectly, but then they did it privately, for they took him unto them, *Acts xviii. 26.* 6. Here are two very good reasons given for the man's authority over the woman, and her subjection to the man, *ver. 13, 14.* Adam was first formed, then Eve; she was created for the man, and not the man for the woman, *1 Cor. xi. 9.* then she was deceived, and brought the man into the transgression. Lastly, Though the difficulties and dangers of child-bearing are many and great, as they are part of the punishment inflicted on the sex for Eve's transgression, yet here is much for her support and encouragement, notwithstanding she shall be saved, &c. Though in sorrow, yet she shall bring forth, and be a living mother of living children; with this proviso, that they continue in faith, in charity, and holiness, with sobriety; and women under the circumstance of child-bearing should by faith lay hold on this promise for their support in the needful time.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter our apostle treats of church-officers. And, 1. He gives us the qualifications of a person to be admitted to the office of a bishop, *ver. 1—8.* 2. Of the qualifications of deacons, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* And of their wives, *ver. 11.* And again of the deacons, *ver. 12, 13.* 3. Of the reasons of his writing to Timothy, whereupon he speaks of the church and the foundation of truth professed therein, *ver. 14,* to the end.

1. THIS is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity: 5. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6. Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.

The two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, contain a scripture plan of church-government, or a direction to ministers. Timothy, we suppose, was an evangelist that was left at Ephesus, to take care of those whom the Holy Ghost had made bishops there, i. e. the presbyters, as appears by *Acts xx. 28.* where the care of the church was committed to the presbyters, and they were called bishops. It seems they were very loth to part with Paul, especially because he told them, they should see his face no more, *Acts xx. 38.* for their church was but newly planted, they were afraid of undertaking the care of it, and therefore Paul left Timothy with them to set them in order.

And here we have the character of a gospel-minister, whose office it is, as a bishop, to preside in a particular congregation of Christians. If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work, *ver. 1.* The ministry is a work. However the office of a bishop may be now thought a good preferment, then it was thought a good work.

Observe, 1. The office of a scripture-bishop is an office of divine appointment, and not of human invention; the ministry is not a creature of the state.

state, and it is pity that the minister should be at any time the tool of the state. The office of the ministry was in the church before the magistrate countenanced Christianity, for this office is one of the great gifts Christ hath bestowed on the church, *Eph. iv. 9, 11.* 2. This office of a christian bishop is a work which requires diligence and application: The apostle represents it under the notion and character of a work, not of great honour and advantage; for ministers should always look more to their work, than to the honour and advantage of their office. 3. It is a good work, a work of the greatest importance, and designed for the greatest good: The ministry is conversant about no lower concerns than the life and happiness of immortal souls; it is a good work, because designed to illustrate the divine perfections in bringing many sons unto glory; the ministry is appointed to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, *2 Cor. xvi. 18.* 4. There ought to be an earnest desire of the office in those who would be put into it; if a man desires, he should earnestly desire it, for the prospect he hath of bringing greater glory to God, and of doing the greatest good to the souls of men by this means. This is the question proposed to those who offer themselves to the ministry of the church of England: "Do you think you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?"

And in order to the discharge of this office, the doing of this work, the workman must be duly qualified.

1. A minister must be *blameless*, i. e. not lie under any scandal; he must give as little occasion for blame as can be, because that will be a prejudice to his ministry, and will reflect reproach upon his office.

2. He must be *the husband of one wife*. Not having given a bill of divorce to one, and then taken another, or not having many wives at once, as at that time was too common both among Jews and Gentiles, especially among the Gentiles.

3. He must be *vigilant* and watchful against Satan, that subtle enemy; he must watch over himself and the souls of those that are committed to his charge; of whom having taken the oversight, he must improve all opportunities of doing them good. A minister ought to be vigilant, because our adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, *1 Pet. v. 8.*

4. He must be *sober*; i. e. temperate, moderate in all his actions, and in the use of all creature comforts. Sobriety and watchfulness are often in scripture put together, because they mutually befriend one another; be sober, be vigilant.

5. He must be of *good behaviour*, composed and solid, and not light and vain and frothy.

6. He must be *given to hospitality*; open-handed to strangers, and ready to entertain them according to his ability, as one that doth not set his heart upon the wealth of the world, and that is a true lover of his brethren.

7. *Apt to teach*. Therefore this is a preaching bishop that Paul describes, one that is both able and willing to communicate to others the knowledge which God hath given him; one that is fit to teach, and ready to take all opportunities of giving instruction; that is, himself well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven, and is communicative of what he knows to others.

8. No drunkard, *not given to wine*. The priests were not to drink wine when they went in to minister, *Lev. x. 8, 9, lest they drink and pervert the law.*

9. No *striker*; i. e. one that is not quarrelsome, nor apt to use violence to any, but doth every thing with mildness, love, and gentleness: The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all, *2 Tim. ii. 24.*

10. One that is *not greedy of filthy lucre*; i. e. that doth not make his ministry to trundle to any secular design or interest; that useth no mean, base, sordid ways of getting money; that is dead to the wealth of this world, and lives above it; and makes it appear he is so.

11. He must be *patient* and *not a brawler*; of a mild disposition. Christ, the great shepherd and bishop of souls, is so. Not apt to be angry or quarrelsome, as not a striker with his hands, so not a brawler with his tongue; for how shall men teach others to govern their tongues, who do not make conscience of keeping them under good government themselves?

12. *Not covetous*. Covetousness is bad in any, but it is worst in a minister, whose calling leads him to converse so much in another world.

13. He must be one that keeps his family in good order; *that rules well in his own house*, that he may set a good example to other masters of families to do so too; and that he may thereby give a proof of his ability to take care of the church of God; *For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* Observe, The families of ministers ought to be examples of good to all other families. Ministers must have their children in subjection; then it is the duty of ministers children to submit to the instructions that are given them. *With all gravity*. Observe, that the best way to keep inferiors in subjection, is to be grave with them. Not having his children in subjection with all *austerity*, but with *gravity*.

14. He must not be a *novice*; i. e. not one newly brought to the Christian religion; or not one that is but meanly instructed in it, that knows no more of religion than the surface of it, for such a one is apt to be *lifted up with pride*; the more ignorant men are, the more proud they are. *Lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.* The devils fell through pride, which is a good reason why we should take heed of pride, because it is a sin that turned angels into devils.

15. He must be of good reputation among his neighbours, and under no reproach from former conversation; for the devil will make use of that to insinuate others, and work in them an aversion to the doctrine of Christ preached by those that have not had a good report.

Now upon the whole, having briefly gone through the qualifications of a gospel-bishop, we may, (1.) With great reason cry out as St. Paul doth *Who is sufficient for these things?* *2 Cor. ii. 16.* *Hic labor, hoc opus: This is a work indeed.* What piety, what prudence, what zeal, what courage, what faithfulness, what watchfulness over ourselves, our lusts, appetites and passions, and over those under our charge; I say, what holy watchfulness is necessary in this work. (2.) Have not the best qualified, and the most faithful and conscientious ministers just reason to complain against themselves, that so much is requisite by way of qualification, and so much work is necessary to be done? And alas! How far short do the best come of what should be, and what they should do! (3.) Yet let these bless God and be thankful, whom the Lord hath enabled and counted faithful, putting them into the ministry; if God is pleased to make any, in some degree, able and faithful, let him have the praise and glory of it. (4.) For the encouragement of all faithful ministers, we have Christ's gracious word of promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,* *Matt. xxviii. 20.* And if he be with us, he will fit us for our work in some measure, and carry us through the difficulties of it with comfort, and graciously pardon our imperfections, and reward our faithfulness with a crown of glory that fadeth not away, *1 Pet. v. 4.*

8. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, 9. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure

conscience. 10. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1. We have here the character of deacons: Those had the care of the temporal concerns of the church, that is, the maintenance of the ministers and provision for the poor: They served tables, while the ministers or bishops gave themselves only to the ministry of the word and prayer, *Acts vi. 2, 4.* Of the institution of this office with that which gave occasion to it, you have an account in *Acts vi. 1—7.* Now it was requisite the deacons should have a good character, because they were assistants to the ministers, appeared and acted publicly, and had a great trust reposed in them. They must be grave; gravity becomes all Christians, but especially those that are in office in the church. *Not double-tongued*; that will say one thing to one, and another thing to another, according as their interest leads them; a double-tongue comes from a double heart, flatterers and slanderers are double-tongued. *Not given to much wine*; for that is a great disparagement to any man, especially to a Christian, and one in office, distorts men for business, opens the door to many temptations. *Not greedy of filthy lucre*: This would especially be bad in the deacons that were intrusted with the church's money; and if they were covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, would be tempted to embezzle it, and convert that to their own use which was intended for the public service. *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience*, ver. 9. Note, The mystery of faith is best held in a pure conscience. The practical love of truth is the most powerful preservative from error and delusion. If we keep a pure conscience, i. e. take heed of every thing that debauches conscience, and draws us away from God, that will preserve in our souls the mystery of faith. *Let these also be proved*, ver. 10. It is not fit the public trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they are first proved and found fit for the business they are to be intrusted with; the soundness of their judgments, their zeal for Christ, and the blamelessness of their conversation must be proved.

2. Their wives likewise must have a good character, ver. 11. they must be of a grave behaviour, not slanderers, tale-bearers, carrying stories to make mischief and sow discord; they must be sober and faithful in all things, not given to any excess, but trusty in all that is committed to them. All that are related to ministers must double their care to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, lest if they in any thing walk disorderly the ministry be blamed. As he said before of the bishops or ministers, so here of the deacons, they must be the husbands of one wife, such as had not put away their wives upon dislike and married others; they must rule their children and their own houses well; families of ministers should be examples to other families. And the reason why the deacons must be thus qualified is, ver. 13. because though the office of a deacon be of an inferior degree, yet it is a step towards the higher degree; and they that had served tables well the church might see cause afterwards to discharge them from that service, and prefer them to serve in preaching the word and in prayer. Or it may be meant of the good reputation that a man would gain by his fidelity in this office; *They will purchase to themselves great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

Observe. 1. In the primitive church there were but two orders of ministers or officers, bishops and deacons, *Philip. i. 1.* After ages have invented the rest. The office of the bishop, presbyter, pastor or minister, was confined to prayer and to the ministry of the word; and the office of the deacon was confined to, or at least principally conversant about serving tables. Clemens Romanus, in his epistle to the Christians, cap. 42, 44, speaks very fully and plainly to this purpose, that the apostles foreknowing, by our Lord Jesus Christ, there would arise in the christian church a controversy about the name Episcopacy, appointed the forementioned orders, bishops and deacons. 2. The scripture deacon's main employment was to serve tables, and not to preach or baptize. It is true indeed, Philip did preach and baptize many in Samaria, *Acts viii.* but you read he was an evangelist, *Acts xxi. 8.* and he might preach and baptize, and perform any other part of the ministerial office under that character: But still the design of the deacon's office was, to mind the temporal concerns of the church, such as the salaries of the ministers, and providing for the poor. 3. Several qualifications were necessary, even for these inferior officers, *The deacons must be grave, &c.* 4. Some trial should be made of persons qualifications before they are admitted into office in the church, or have any trusts committed to them, *Let these also first be proved.* 5. Integrity and uprightness in an inferior office, is the way to be preferred to an higher station in the church. *They purchase to themselves a good degree.* 6. This will also give a man great boldness in the faith, whereas a want of integrity and uprightness will make a man timorous and ready to tremble at his own shadow, *The wicked fleeeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion,* *Prov. xxviii. 1.*

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

He concludes the chapter with a particular direction to Timothy.

1. He hoped shortly to come to him to give him further directions and assistance in his work, and to see that Christianity was well planted, and took root well at Ephesus; he therefore wrote the more briefly to him. But,

2. He wrote *lest he should tarry long, that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God*, i. e. how to carry himself as became an evangelist and a substitute of the apostle's. Observe, Those that are employed in the house of God must see to it, that they behave themselves well, lest they bring reproach upon the house of God, and that worthy name by which they are called. Ministers ought to behave themselves well, and to look not only to their praying and preaching, but to their behaviour: Their office binds them to their good behaviour, for any behaviour will not do in this case. Timothy must know how to behave himself, not only in that particular church where he was now appointed to reside for some time, but being an evangelist and substitute of the apostle's he must learn how to behave himself in other churches, where he should in like manner be appointed to reside

side for some time; and therefore it is not the church of Ephesus, but the catholic church, which is here called *the house of God, which is the church of the living God*.

Observe here, 1. God is the living God, he is the fountain of life, he is life in himself, and he gives life, breath and all things to his creatures, in him we live, and move, and have our being; *Acts xvii. 25, 28.* 2. The church is the house of God, he dwells there, the Lord hath chosen Zion to dwell there; this is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it, there may we see God's power and glory, *Psal. lxxiii. 2.*

It is the great support of the church, that it is the church of the *living God*, the true God in opposition to false gods, dumb and dead idols. *The pillar and ground of truth*; that is either,

1. The church itself, that is the pillar and ground of truth. Not that the authority of the scriptures depends upon that of the church, as the papists pretend, for truth is the pillar and ground of the church; but the church holds forth the scripture and the doctrine of Christ, as the pillar to which a proclamation is affixed holds forth the proclamation; *Even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10.

2. Others understand it of Timothy. He, not he himself only, but he as an evangelist, he and other faithful ministers are the pillars and ground of truth; *i. e.* It is their business to maintain, hold up and publish the truths of Christ in the church. It is said of the apostles, that *they seemed to be pillars*, Gal. ii. 9.

(1.) Let us be diligent and impartial in our own inquiries after truth, let us buy the truth at any rate, and not think much of any pains to discover it. (2.) Let us be careful to keep and preserve it; *Buy the truth, and sell it not*, Prov. xxiii. 23. do not part with it on any consideration. (3.) Let us take care to publish it, and to transmit it safe and uncorrupted unto posterity. (4.) When the church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to truth should be greater than our regard to the church; we are no longer obliged to continue in the church, than she continues to be the pillar and ground of truth.

Now what is the truth which the churches and ministers are the pillars and grounds of? He tells us, *ver. 16.* That *without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*. The learned Camero joins this with what goes before, and then it runs thus, The pillar and ground of the truth, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He supposes this mystery to be the pillar, &c.

Observe, 1. That Christianity is a mystery, a mystery that could not have been found out by reason or the light of nature, and cannot be comprehended by reason, because it is above reason, though not contrary thereto; It is a mystery, not of philosophy or speculation; but, 2. It is a mystery of godliness, designed to promote godliness; and here in it exceeds all the mysteries of the Gentiles. 3. It is a revealed mystery, not shut up and sealed, and it doth not cease to be a mystery, because now in part revealed.

Now what is the mystery of godliness? It is Christ; and here are six things concerning Christ, which make up the mystery of godliness.

1. That he is God manifest in the flesh. *God was manifest in the flesh*. This proves that he is God the eternal Word that was made flesh, and was manifest in the flesh. When God was to be manifested to man, he was pleased to manifest himself in the incarnation of his own Son; *The word was made flesh*, John i. 14.

2. He is justified in the Spirit; *i. e.* Whereas he was reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, he was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all calumnies, with which he was loaded. *He was made sin for us, and was delivered for our offences*; but being raised again, he was justified in the Spirit; *i. e.* it was made to appear that his sacrifice was accepted, and so he rose again for our justification, as he was delivered for our offences, Rom. iv. 25. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 18.

3. He was seen of angels. They worshipped him, *Heb. i. 6.* they attended his incarnation, his temptation, his agony, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; this is much to his honour, and shews what a mighty interest he hath in the upper world, that angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels.

4. He is preached unto the Gentiles. This is a great part of the mystery of godliness, that Christ was offered to the Gentiles a Redeemer and Saviour; that whereas before salvation was of the Jews, the partition-wall was now taken down, and the Gentiles were taken in; *I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles*, *Acts xiii. 47.*

5. That he was believed on in the word, so that he was not preached in vain. Many of the Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Who would have thought that the world that lay in wickedness should have believed in the Son of God? should take him to be their Saviour who was himself crucified at Jerusalem: But notwithstanding all the prejudices they laboured under, he was believed on. &c.

6. He was received up into glory: In his ascension. This indeed was before he was believed on in the world; but it is put last, because it was the crown of his exaltation, and because it is not only his ascension that is meant, but his sitting at the right hand of God, where *he ever lives making intercession*, and hath all power, both in heaven and earth: And because in the apostasy, of which he treats in the following chapter, his remaining in heaven would be denied by those who pretend to bring him down on their altars in the consecrated wafers.

Observe, 1. He who was manifest in flesh was God, really and truly God; God by nature, and not only so by office, for this makes it to be a mystery. 2. God was manifest in flesh, real flesh, for as much as children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, *Heb. ii. 14.* And what is more amazing, he was manifest in the flesh, after all flesh had corrupted his way, though he himself was holy from the womb. 3. Godliness is a mystery in all its parts and branches, from the beginning of the end, from Christ's incarnation to his ascension. 4. It being a great mystery, we should rather humbly adore it and piously believe it, than curiously pry into it, or be too positive in our explications of it and determinations about it, farther than the holy scriptures have revealed it to us.

CHAP. IV.

St. Paul here foretels, 1. A dreadful apostasy, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* 2. He treats of Christian liberty, *ver. 4, 5.* 3. He gives Timothy divers directions with respect to himself, his doctrine, and the people under his care, *ver. 6,* to the end.

1. NOW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: 2. Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience

seared with a hot iron; 3. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

We have here a prophecy of the apostasy of the latter times, which he had spoken of as a thing expected and taken for granted among Christians, 2 *Theff. ii.* In the close of the foregoing chapter we had the mystery of godliness summed up, and therefore very fitly in the beginning of this chapter we have the mystery of iniquity summed up. *The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith*; whether he means the Spirit in the Old Testament, or the Spirit in the prophets of the New Testament, or both. The prophecies concerning antichrist, as well as the prophecies concerning Christ, come from the Spirit. The Spirit in both spake expressly of a general apostasy from the faith of Christ and the pure worship of God: This should come in the latter times, *i. e.* during the Christian dispensation, for those are called the latter days; in the following ages of the church, for the mystery of iniquity now began to work. *Some shall depart from the faith*, or there shall be an apostasy from the faith. *Some*, not all; for in the worst of times God will have a remnant, according to the election of grace: *They shall depart from the faith*, the faith delivered to the saints, *Jude 3.* and it was delivered at once, *i. e.* the sound doctrine of the gospel, *Giving heed to seducing spirits*; *i. e.* men that pretended to the Spirit, but were not really guided by the Spirit, 1 *John iv. 1.* *Beloved, believe not every spirit*; *i. e.* every one that pretends to the Spirit. Now here observe,

1. One of the great instances of that apostasy, and that is giving heeding to doctrines of demons, or concerning demons; *i. e.* Those doctrines which teach the worship of saints and angels, as a middle sort of deities, between the immortal God and mortal men, such as the heathen called demons, and worshipped under that notion. Now this plainly agrees to the church of Rome, and it was one of the first steps towards that great apostasy, the insinuating of the relics of martyrs, paying divine honours to them, erecting altars, burning incense, consecrating images and temples, and making prayers and praises to the honour of saints departed. This demon-worship is paganism revived, the image of the first beast.

2. The instruments of promoting and propagating this apostasy and delusion. It will be done by *hypocrisy* of those that speak lies, *ver. 2.* *speaking lies of hypocrisy*; *i. e.* the agent and emissaries of Satan, that promote these delusions by lies and forgeries, and pretended miracles. It is done by their hypocrisy, professing honour to Christ, and yet at the same time fighting against all his anointed officers, and corrupting or profaning all his ordinances. The hypocrisy likewise of those that have *their consciences seared with a red hot iron*; *i. e.* that they are perfectly lost to the very first principles of virtue and moral honesty. If men had not their consciences seared as with a hot iron, they could never maintain a power to dispense with oaths for the good of the catholic cause, could never maintain that no faith is to be kept with heretics, could never divest themselves of all remains of humanity and compassion, and clothe themselves with the most barbarous cruelty, under pretence of promoting the interest of the church.

Another part of their character is, that they *forbid to marry*, forbid their clergy to marry, and speak very reproachfully of marriage, though an ordinance of God; and that they command to *abstain from meats*, and place religion in that at certain times and seasons, only to exercise a tyranny over the consciences of men.

(1.) The apostasy of the latter times should not surprise us, because it was expressly foretold by the Spirit. (2.) The Spirit is God, otherwise he could not certainly foresee such distant events, which as to us are uncertain and contingent, depending on the tempers, humours and lusts of men. (3.) The difference between the predictions of the Spirit, and the oracles of the heathen; the Spirit speaketh expressly, but the oracles of the heathen were always doubtful and uncertain. (4.) It is comfortable to think that in such general apostasies all are not carried away but only some. (5.) It is common for seducers and deceivers to pretend to the Spirit, which is a strong presumption that all are convinced that this is the most likely to work in us an approbation of what pretends to come from the Spirit. (6.) Men must be hardened and their consciences seared before they can depart from the faith, and draw in others to side with them. (7.) It is a sign men have departed from the faith, when they will command what God hath forbidden, such as saint and angel, or demon-worship; and forbid what God hath allowed or commanded, such as marriage and meats.

Upon occasion of the mentioning of their hypocritical fastings, the apostle lays down the doctrine of the Christian liberty which we enjoy under the gospel, of using God's good creatures. That whereas under the law there was a distinction of meats between clean and unclean, such sort of flesh they might eat, and such they might not eat, all this is now taken away; and we are to *call nothing common or unclean*, *Acts x. 15.*

1. We are to look upon our food as that which God hath created; we have it from him, and therefore must use it for him.

2. God, in making those things, had a special regard to them which believe and know the truth; *i. e.* good Christians which have a covenant right to the creatures; whereas others have only a common right.

3. What God hath created is to be received with thanksgiving. We must not refuse the gifts of God's bounty, nor be scrupulous in making differences where God hath made none; but take it and be thankful, acknowledging the power of God the maker of them, and the bounty of God the giver of them.

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, *ver. 4.* This plainly sets us at liberty from all the distinctions of meats appointed by the ceremonial law, as particularly that of swines flesh, which the Jews were forbidden to eat; but is allowed to us Christians by this rule, *Every creature of God is good, &c.* Observe, That God's good creatures are then good, and doubly sweet to us when they are received with thanksgiving.

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, *ver. 5.* It is a desirable thing to have a sanctified use of our creature-comforts: Now they are sanctified to us.

1. By the word of God; not only his permission, allowing us the liberty of the use of these things, but his promise to feed us with food convenient for us. This gives us a sanctified use of our creature-comforts.

2. By prayer, which blesses our meat to us. The word of God and prayer must be brought to our common actions and affairs, and then we do all in faith.

Observe, 1. Every creature is God's, for he made them. *Every beast in the forest is mine*, (says God) *and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the souls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the fields are mine*, *Psal. l. 10, 11; 2.* Every creature of God is good: When the blessed God took a survey of all his works, God saw all that was made, and behold it was very good,

Gen. i. 31. 3. The blessing of God makes every creature nourishing to us; man that lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, *Matt. iv. 4.* and therefore nothing ought to be refused. 4. We ought therefore to ask his blessing by prayer, and to sanctify the creatures we receive by prayer.

6. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7. But refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 8. For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. 10. For therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11. These things command and teach. 12. Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. 15. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. 16. Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance, &c. He would have Timothy to instil such notions as these into the minds of Christians, which might prevent their being seduced by the judaizing teachers. Observe, Those are good ministers of Jesus Christ, that are diligent in their work; not that study to advance new notions, but that put the brethren in remembrance of those things that they have received and heard. *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, 2 Pet. i. 12.* And elsewhere, *I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, 2 Pet. iii. 1.* And says the apostle Jude, *I will therefore put you in remembrance, Jude 5.* You see the apostles and apostolical men reckoned it a main part of their work, to put their hearts in remembrance, for we are apt to forget, and slow to learn and remember the things of God. *Nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.* Observe, 1. That even ministers themselves have need to be growing and increasing in the knowledge of Christ and his doctrine: They must be nourished up in the words of faith, 2. Observe, The best way for ministers to grow in knowledge and faith, is to put the brethren in remembrance; while we teach others we teach ourselves. 3. They whom ministers teach are brethren, and are to be treated like brethren; For ministers are not lords of God's heritage.

1. Godliness is here pressed upon him and others. *Refuse profane and old wives sayings, ver. 7, 8.* The Jewish traditions which some people fill their heads with, have nothing to do with them. *But exercise thyself rather unto godliness; i. e. mind practical religion.* Those that would be godly must exercise themselves unto godliness, it requires a constant exercise: The reason is taken from the gain of godliness; *bodily exercise profiteth little, or for a little time.* Abstinence from meats and marriage, and the like, though they puff for acts of mortification and self denial, yet they profit little, they turn to little account. What will it avail us to mortify the body, if we do not mortify sin?

Observe, That there is a great deal to be got by godliness; it will be of use to us in the conduct of our whole conversation; *for it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Observe, That the gain of godliness lies much in the promise; And the promises made to godly people relate to the life that now is; but especially they relate to the life which is to come. Under the Old Testament the promises were mostly of temporal blessings, but under the New Testament of spiritual and eternal blessings. If godly people have but little of the good things of the life that now is, yet it shall be made up to them in the good things of the life that is to come. Observe further, There were profane and old wives fables in the days of the apostles; and Timothy, though an excellent man, was not above such a word of advice, *refuse profane, &c.* Again, It is not enough that we refuse profane and old wives fables, but we must exercise ourselves to godliness, we must not only cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well, *Isa. i. 16, 17.* and we must make a practice of exercising ourselves to godliness: And, lastly, Those that are truly godly shall not be losers at last, whatever becomes of those who content themselves with bodily exercise, for godliness hath the promise, &c.

2. The encouragement which we have to proceed in the ways of godliness, and to exercise ourselves to it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements that we meet with in it. He had said, ver. 8. that it is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is. But the question is, whether the profit will balance the loss? for if it will not, it is not profit. Yes, we are sure it will. Here is another of Paul's faithful sayings, *worthy of all acceptance*, that all our labours and losses in the service of God and work of religion, will be abundantly recompensed: So that though we lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him. *Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, ver. 10.*

Observe, 1. That godly people must labour and expect reproach, they must do well, and yet expect at the same time to suffer ill; toil and trouble is to be expected by us, not only as men, but as saints in this world. 2. Those that labour and suffer reproach in the service of God and the work of religion, may depend upon the living God, that they shall not lose by it. Let this encourage them, *We trust in the living God.* The consideration of this, that that God who hath undertaken to be our pay-master is the living God, who doth himself live for ever, and is the fountain of life to all that serve him, should encourage us in all our services, and in all our sufferings for him, especially considering that he is the Saviour of all men; i. e.

1. By his providences, he protects the persons, and prolongs the lives of the children of men.

2. He hath a general good-will to the eternal salvation of all men thus far, that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance: He desires not the death of sinners; he is thus far the Sa-

viour of all men, that none are left in the same desperate condition that fallen angels are in. Now if he be thus the Saviour of all men, we may from hence infer, that much more he will be the rewarder of those that seek and serve him; if he have such a good-will for all his creatures, much more will he provide well for those that are new creatures; that are born again. He is the Saviour of all men, but especially of those that believe; and the salvation he hath in store for those that believe, is sufficient to recompense them for all their services and sufferings.

Here we see, 1. The life of a Christian is a life of labour and suffering, we labour and suffer. 2. The best we can expect to suffer in the present life is reproach for our well-doing, for our work of faith and labour of love. 3. True Christians trust in the living God, for cursed is the man that trusteth in man, or in any but the living God; and they that trust in him shall never be ashamed; trust in him at all times. 4. God is the general Saviour of all men, as he hath put them into a salvable state; but he is in a peculiar manner the Saviour of true believers; there is then a general and a special redemption.

3. He concludes the chapter with an exhortation to Timothy, 1. To command and teach these things, that he had now been teaching him. Command them to exercise themselves unto godliness, teach them the profit of it, and that if they serve God, they serve one who will be sure to bear them out.

2. He charges him to carry himself with the gravity and prudence as might gain him respect, notwithstanding his youth. *Let no man despise thy youth; i. e. give no man an occasion to despise thy youth.* Mens youth will not be despised, if they do not by youthful vanities and follies make themselves despicable; and that men may do who are old, and may thank themselves if they be despised.

3. He charges him to confirm his doctrine by a good example; *Be thou an example of the believers, &c.* Observe, Those that teach by their doctrine, must teach by their life, else they pull down with one hand what they build up with the other; They must be examples both in word and conversation. Their discourse must be edifying, and that will be a good example: Their conversation must be strict, and that will be a good example: They must be examples in charity, or love to God and all good-men: examples in spirit; i. e. in spiritual-mindedness, in spiritual worship; in faith, i. e. in the profession of Christian faith: And in purity or chastity.

4. He charges him to study hard. *Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, to meditation upon these things, ver. 13.* Though Timothy had extraordinary gifts, yet he must use ordinary means: Or, it may be meant of the public reading of the scriptures, he must read and exhort; i. e. read and expound, read and press what he read upon them; he must expound it both by way of exhortation, and by way of doctrine; i. e. he must teach them both what to do, and what to believe.

Observe, 1. Ministers must teach and command the things that they are taught and commanded themselves to do; they must teach people to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded, *Matt. xxviii. 20.* 2. The best way for ministers to prevent being despised, is to teach and practise things that are given them in charge. No wonder if ministers are despised who do not teach these things; or instead of being examples of good to believers, act directly contrary to the doctrines they preach; for ministers are to be ensamples of their flock. 3. Those ministers who are the best accomplished for their work must yet mind their studies, that they may be improving in knowledge; and they must mind also their work; they are to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, ver. 14. The gifts of God will wither if they be neglected: It may be understood either of the office to which he was advanced, or of his qualifications for that office; if of the former, it was ordination in an ordinary way, if of the latter, it was extraordinary. It seems to be the former, for it was by laying on of hands, &c. Here see the scripture way of ordination, it was by laying on of hands, and laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Observe, Timothy was ordained by men in office. It was an extraordinary gift that we read elsewhere was conferred on him by the laying on of Paul's hands, but he was invested in the office of the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

1. We may note the office of the ministry is a gift, it is the gift of Christ, when he ascended up on high he received gifts for men, and he gave some apostles, &c. and some pastors and teachers, *Ephes. iv. 8, 11.* and this was a very kind gift to his church. 2. Ministers ought not to neglect whatever gift is bestowed upon them, whether by gift we are here to understand the office of the ministry, or qualifications for that office, neither the one nor the other must be neglected. 3. Though there was prophecy in the case of Timothy, the gift was given by prophecy, yet this was accompanied with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, that is a number of presbyters, the office was conveyed to him this way, and I should think here is a sufficient warrant for ordination by presbyters, since it doth not appear St. Paul was concerned in Timothy's ordination: It is true, extraordinary gifts were conferred on him by the laying on of the apostle's hands, *2 Tim. i. 6.* but if he was concerned in his ordination, the presbytery was not excluded, for that is particularly mentioned; from whence it seems pretty evident, that the presbytery have the inherent power of ordination.

Having this work committed to him, he must give himself wholly to it, be wholly in those things, *that thy profiting may appear.* He was a wise knowing man, and yet he still must be profiting, and make it appear that he improved in knowledge.

1. Ministers are to be much in meditation, they are to consider beforehand how and what they must speak, they are to meditate on the great trust committed to them, of the worth and value of immortal souls, and of the account they must give at the last. 2. Ministers must be wholly in these things, they must mind these things as their principal work and business, *give thyself wholly to them.* 3. By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way for them to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others.

5. He presses it upon him to be very cautious, *take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine*, consider what thou preacheest: *continue in them, i. e. in the truths that thou hast received:* And this will be the way to save thyself and those that hear thee. Observe, Ministers are engaged in saving work, which makes it a good work. 2. The care of ministers should be in the first place to save themselves; save thyself in the first place, so shalt thou be instrumental to save them that hear thee. Observe, 3. Ministers in preaching should aim at the salvation of those that hear them, next to the salvation of their own souls. 4. The best way to answer both these ends, is to take heed to ourselves, &c.

CHAP. V.

Here the apostle directs Timothy, 1. How to reprove, ver. 1, 2. 2. Of widows, both elder and younger, ver. 3—17. 3. Of elders, ver. 17, 18. 4. Of public reproof, ver. 20. 5. A solemn charge of ordination, ver. 21, 22. 6. Of his health, ver. 23. and of mens sins very different in their effects, ver. 24, 25.

1. REBUKE.

1. **REBUKE** not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren; 2. The elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Here the apostle gives rules to Timothy, and in him to other ministers in reproving. Ministers are reprovers by office. Now the rule is,

1. To be very tender in rebuking elders; elders in age, elders by office. Respect must be had to the dignity of their years and place, and therefore they must not be rebuked sharply nor magisterially; but Timothy himself, though an evangelist, must intreat them as fathers, for that would be the likeliest way to work upon them, and to win upon them.

2. The younger must be rebuked as brethren with love and tenderness, not as desirous to spy faults or pick quarrels, but as those that are willing to make the best of them. There is need of a great deal of meekness in reproving those that deserve reproof.

3. The elder women must be reproved when there is occasion, they must be reproved as mothers, *Hof. ii. 2. Plead with your mother, plead.*

4. The younger women must be reproved, but reproved as *sisters, with all purity.* If Timothy, so mortified a man to this world, and to the flesh and the lusts of it, had need of such a caution as this, much more have we.

Observe, 1. Ministers are reprovers by office, it is a part, though the least pleasing part of their office, they are to preach the word, &c. to reprove and rebuke, *2 Tim. iv. 2.* 2. A great difference is to be made in our reproofs according to the age, quality, and other circumstances of the persons rebuked; thus an elder in age or office must be intreated as a father; *of some have compassion, making a difference, Jude 22.*

3. Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6. But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth. 7. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9. Let not a widow be taken into the number, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the faints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12. Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15. For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Directions are here given concerning the taking of widows into the number of those that were employed by the church, and had maintenance from the church; *Honour widows that are widows indeed.* Honour them, *i. e.* maintain them, admit them into office. (There was in those times an office in the church in which widows were employed, and that was to tend the sick, the aged, to look to them by the direction of the deacons.) We read of the care taken of widows, immediately upon the first forming of the Christian church, *Acts vi. 1.* where the Grecians thought their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations and provision that was made for poor widows. The general rule is to honour widows that are widows indeed, *i. e.* to maintain them, relieve them with respect and tenderness.

1. It is appointed that those widows only should be relieved by the charity of the church, that were pious and devout, and not wanton widows that lived in pleasures, *ver. 5, 6.* She is to be reckoned a widow indeed, and fit to be maintained at the church's charge, that being desolate, trusteth in God. Observe, That it is the duty and comfort of those that are desolate to trust in God. Therefore God sometimes brings his people into such straits that they have nothing else to trust to, that they may with more confidence trust in him. Widowhood is a desolate estate, but let the widows trust in me, *Jer. xlix. 11.* and rejoice that they have a God to trust to. Again, They that trust in God must continue in prayer. If by faith we confide in God, by prayer we must give glory to God, and commit ourselves to his conduct. Anna was a widow indeed, that departed not from the temple, *Luke ii. 37.* but served God with fasting and prayer night and day: But she is not a widow indeed that liveth in pleasure, *ver. 6.* or that liveth licentiously. A jovial widow is not a widow indeed, not fit to be taken under the care of the church. She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives, is no living member of the church, but as a carcase in it, or a mortified member. We may apply it more generally, those that live in pleasure are dead while they live, spiritually dead, *dead in trespasses and sins;* they are in the world to no purpose, buried alive as to the great ends of living.

2. Another rule he gives is, that the church should not be charged with the maintenance of those widows that had relations of their own that were able to maintain them. This is mentioned several times, *ver. 4.* *If any widow have children or nephews, i. e.* grand-children or near relations, let them maintain them, and let not the church be burdened. So *ver. 19,* this is called shewing piety at home, *ver. 4.* or shewing piety towards their own families. Observe, that the respect of children to their parents, and their care of them, is fitly called piety. This is requiting their parents. Children can never sufficiently requite their parents for the care they have taken of them, and the pains they have taken with them, but, however, they must

endeavour to do it. It is the indispensable duty of children, if their parents be in necessity, and they are in ability to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power, *for that is good and acceptable before God.* The Pharisees taught that a gift to the altar was more acceptable to God than relieving a poor parent, *Matt. xv. 5.* But here we are told that this is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices: *this is good and acceptable, &c.* He speaks of this again, *ver. 8.* *If any man provide not for his own, &c. i. e.* If any man or woman do not maintain their own poor relations, that belong to them, they do in effect deny the faith; for the design of Christ was to confirm the law of Moses, and particularly the law of the fifth commandment, which is, *Honour thy father and mother;* so that they deny the faith that disobey that law, much more if they provide not for their wives and children, and those that are parts of themselves; if they spend that upon their lusts that should maintain their families, they have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels.

One reason why this care must be taken, that those that were rich should maintain their poor relations, and not burden the church with them, is *ver. 16.* *that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.* Observe, that charity misplaced, is a great hinderance to true charity; therefore there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those that are not properly so, that there may be the more for those that are the real objects of charity.

3. He gives directions concerning the characters of the widows, that were to be taken into the number to receive the church's charity; Not under sixty years old, nor any that have divorced their husbands, or been divorced from them, and have married again; she must have been the wife of one man, such as had been a housekeeper, had a good name for hospitality and charity, *well reported of for good works.* Observe, That particular care ought to be taken to relieve those when they fall into decay: who, when they had werewithall, were ready to every good work.

Here are instances of such good works as are proper to be done by good wives: *If she have brought up children,* he doth not say, if she have born children; *children are an heritage of the Lord,* that depends on the will of God: but if she had not children of her own, yet if she brought up children: *If she have lodged strangers,* and washed the faints feet; *i. e.* if she have been ready to give entertainment to good Christians and good ministers, when they were in their travels for the spreading of the gospel washing of the feet of their friends was a part of their entertainments. *If she have relieved the afflicted* when she had the ability, let her be relieved now. Observe, That those that would find mercy when they are in distress, must shew mercy when they are in prosperity.

4. He cautions them to take heed of admitting into the number those that are likely to be no credit to them, *ver. 11.* *The younger widows refuse, &c.* they will be weary of their employments in the church, and of living by rule, as they must do; so they will marry and cast off their first faith, you read of a first love, *Rev. ii. 4.* and here of a first faith, *i. e.* the engagements they gave to the church to behave themselves well, and as became the trust reposed in them; it does not appear by their first faith is meant their vow not to marry, for the scripture is very silent on that head; besides the apostle here adviseth the younger widows to marry, *ver. 14.* which he would not if hereby they must have broken their vows. Dr. Whitby well observes, if this faith referred to a promise made to the church not to marry, it could not be called their first faith, *ver. 13.* Withal they learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers, &c. Observe, That it is seldom that those that are idle are only idle, they learn to be tattlers and busy-bodies, and to make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren: Those who had not attained to such a gravity of mind as was fit for the deaconesses, or the widows that were taken among the church's poor, let them marry, bear children, &c. *ver. 14.* Observe, if housekeepers do not mind their business, and are tattlers, they give occasion to the adversaries of Christianity to reproach the Christian name, which it seems there were some instances of, *ver. 15.*

We learn hence, 1. In the primitive church there was care taken of poor widows, and provision made for them; and the churches of Christ in these days should follow so good an example as far as they are able. 2. In the distribution of the church's charity or alms, great care is to be taken, that those share in the bounty who most want it and best deserve it; a widow was not to be taken into the primitive church that had relations who were able to maintain her, or who was not well reported of for good works but lived in pleasure: but the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry. 3. The credit of religion, and the reputation of Christian churches, is very much concerned in the character and behaviour of those that are taken into any employment in the church, though of a lower nature; such as the business of deaconesses, or that receive alms of the church, if they do not behave well, but are tattlers, busy-bodies, &c. they will give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 4. Christianity obliges its professors to receive their indigent friends, particularly poor widows, that the church may not be charged with them, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed; rich people should be ashamed to burden the church with their poor relations, when it is with difficulty that those are supplied who have no children or nephews that is, grand-children, that are in a capacity to relieve them.

17. Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn: and, The labourer is worthy of his reward. 19. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. 22. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other mens sins: keep thyself pure. 23. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities. 24. Some mens' sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. 25. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

Here are directions concerning ministers.

1. Care must be taken that they be honourably maintained, *ver. 17.* *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, i. e.* of double maintenance, double to what they have had, or to whom others have. *Especially they who labour in the word and doctrine, i. e.* those that are more laborious

laborious than others. Observe, The presbytery ruled, and the same that ruled were those that laboured in the word and doctrine: they had not one to preach to them, and another to rule them, but the work was done by one and the same person.

Some have imagined by the elders that rule well, the apostle means lay-elders who were employed in ruling but not in teaching; they were concerned in church-government, but did not meddle with the administration of the word and sacraments; and I confess this is the plainest text of scripture that can be found to countenance such an opinion; but it seems a little strange, that mere ruling elders should be accounted worthy of double honour: when the apostle preferred preaching to baptizing, and much more would he prefer it to ruling the church, and it is more strange the apostle should take no notice of them when he treats of church officers; but as it is hinted before, they had not, in the primitive church, one to preach to them and another to rule them, but ruling and teaching were performed by the same persons, only some might labour more in the word and doctrine than others. Here we have, 1. The work of ministers. It consists principally in two things, ruling well, and labouring in the word and doctrine; this was the main business of elders or presbyters in the days of the apostles. 2. The honour due to them who were not idle but laborious in this work, they were worthy of double honour, esteem, and maintenance. He quotes scripture to confirm this command concerning the maintenance of ministers, that we would think foreign; but it intimates what a significance there was in many of the laws of Moses, and particularly in that, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn*, Deut. xxv. 4. The beasts that were employed in treading out the corn (for that way they took instead of threshing it) were allowed to feed while they work, so that the more work they did, the more food they had, therefore let the elders that labour in the word and doctrine be well provided for, *for the labourer is worthy of his reward*, Matt. x. 10. and all the reason in the world he should have it.

We hence learn, 1. God, both under the law, and now under the gospel, hath taken care that his ministers be well provided for: Doth God take care for oxen, and will he not take care of his own servants? The ox only treadeth out the corn, of which they make the bread that perisheth, but ministers break the bread of life which endureth for ever. 2. The comfortable subsistence of ministers, as it is God's appointment that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. 1. Cor. ix. 14. so it is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer; and those who would have ministers starved, or not comfortably provided for, God will require it of them another day.

2. Concerning the accusation of ministers, ver. 19. *Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses*; here is the scripture method of proceeding against an elder when accused of any crime. Observe, 1. There must be an accusation, it must not be a flying uncertain report, but an accusation, containing a certain charge, must be drawn up. Farther, he is not to be proceeded against by way of enquiry, this is according to the modern practice of the inquisition, which draws up articles for men to purge themselves of such crimes, or else to accuse themselves; but, according to the advice of St. Paul, there must be an accusation brought against an elder. 2. This accusation is not to be received, unless supported by two or three credible witnesses, and the accusation must be received before them, that is, the accused must have the accusers face to face, because the reputation of a minister is, in a particular manner, a tender thing; and, therefore, before any thing be done in the least to blemish that reputation, great care must be taken that the thing alleged against him be well proved that he be not reproached upon an uncertain surmise; but, ver. 20, *them that sin, rebuke before all*, i. e. thou needest not be so tender of other people, but rebuke them publicly. Or them that sin before all, rebuke before all, that the plaster may be as wide as the wound, and that those who are in danger of sinning by the example of their fall, may take warning by the rebuke given them for it, that others also may fear.

1. Public scandalous sinners must be rebuked publicly, as their sin hath been public, and committed before many, or at least come to the hearing of all, so their reproof must be public and before all. 2. Public rebuke is designed for the good of others, that they may fear, as well as for the good of the party rebuked; as it was ordered under the law, that public offenders should receive public punishment; and all Israel shall hear and fear, and do no more wickedly.

3. Concerning the ordination of ministers, ver. 22. *Lay hands suddenly on no man*; it seems to be meant of the ordaining of men to the office of the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications for it.

Some understand it of absolution, be not too hasty in laying hands on any, remit not the censure of the church to any, till first time be taken for the proof of their sincerity in their repentance, *neither be partaker of other mens' sins*; implying, that those who are too easy in remitting the censures of the church, encourage others in the sins which are thus connived at, and make themselves thereby guilty. Observe, We have great need to watch over ourselves at all times, that we do not make ourselves partakers of other mens' sins. Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like yourself, but from countenancing it, or being any way necessary to it in others.

Here is, 1. A caution against rash ordination of ministers, or absolution of those that have been under church-censures; lay hands suddenly on no man. 2. Those that are rash, either in the one case or the other, will make themselves partakers in other mens' sins. 3. We must keep ourselves pure, if we will be pure; the grace of God makes and keeps us pure, but it is by our own endeavours.

That ver. 24, 25, seems to refer to absolution, *Some mens sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some follow after*, &c. Observe, Ministers have need of a great deal of wisdom, to know how to accommodate themselves to the variety of offences and offenders, that they have occasion to deal with.

1. Some mens' sins are so plain and obvious, and not found by secret search, that there is no dispute concerning the bringing of them under the censure of the church, they go before to judgment to lead them to censure.

2. Others, they follow after, i. e. their wickedness doth not presently appear, nor till after a due search hath been made concerning it. Or as some understand it, some mens' sins continue after they are censured; they are not reformed by the censure, and in that case there must be no absolution.

3. As to the evidences of repentance; the good works of some are manifest beforehand. And they that are otherwise, i. e. whose good works do not appear, their wickedness cannot be hid, and so it will be easy to discern who are to be absolved, and who are not.

1. There are secret and there are open sins; some mens' sins are open beforehand, and going before unto judgment, and some they follow after. 2. Sinners must be differently dealt with by the church. 3. The effects of church-censures are very different, some are thereby humbled and brought to repentance, so that their good works are manifest beforehand, while it is quite otherwise with others. 4. The incorrigible cannot be hid; for God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts.

Lastly, As to Timothy himself.

1. Here is a charge to him to be careful of his office: And a solemn charge it is, *I charge thee before God, as thou wilt answer it to God, before the holy and elect angels: observe these things without partiality*, ver. 21. Observe, It ill becomes ministers to be partial, and to have respect of persons, and to prefer one before another upon any secular account. He charges him, by all that is dear, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, to guard against partiality.

2. Ministers must give an account to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whether, and how they have observed all things given them in charge: and woe to them if they have been partial in their ministrations out of any worldly politic view.

3. He charges him to take care of his health, *drink no longer water*, &c. It seems, Timothy was a mortified man to the pleasures of sense; he drank water, and hew as a man of no strong constitution of body, and for that reason Paul advises him to use wine for the helping of his stomach, and the recruiting of his nature. Observe, It is a little wine, for ministers must not be given to much wine; so much as may be for the health of the body, not so as to distemper it; for God hath made wine to rejoice man's heart.

1. It is the will of God that people should take all due care of our bodies: As we are to make them our masters, so neither our slaves; but to use them so as they may be most fit and helpful to us in the service of God. Observe, 2. Wine is most proper for sickly and weak people, whose stomachs are often out of order, and who labour under infirmities. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts, Prov. xxx. 6. 3. Wine should be used as an help, and not an hindrance to our work and usefulness.

C H A P. VI.

1. He treats of the duty of servants, ver. 1. 2. Of false teachers, ver. 3, 4, 5. 3. Of godliness and covetousness, ver. 6—11. 4. What Timothy was to flee, and what to follow, ver. 11—13. 5. A solemn charge, ver. 13—17. And, 6, A charge for the rich, ver. 17, 18, 19. And lastly, a charge to Timothy, ver. 20, 21.

1. **L**ET as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. 3. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness? 4. He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmises. 5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Here is,

1. The duty of servants. He had spoken before of church-relations, here of family relations. Servants are here said to be *under the yoke*, which notes both subjection and labour; they are yoked to work, not to be idle. If christianity finds servants under the yoke, it continues them under it; for the gospel doth not cancel the obligations any lie under, either by the law of nature, or of mutual consent. They must respect their masters, count them worthy of all honour (because they are their masters) i. e. of all the respect, and observance, and compliance, and obedience, that is justly expected from servants to their masters. Not that they were to think that of them which they were not; but as their masters they must count them worthy of all that honour which was fit for them to receive, that the name of God be not blasphemed. If servants that embraced the Christian religion should grow insolent and disobedient to their masters, the doctrine of Christ would be reflected on for their sakes, as if it had made men worse liver than they had been before they had received the gospel. Observe, If the professors of religion misbehave themselves, the name of God and his doctrine is in danger of being blasphemed, by those that seek occasions to speak evil of that worthy name by which we are called. And this is a good reason, why we should all carry ourselves well that we may prevent the occasion which many seek, and will be very apt to lay hold of, to speak ill of religion for our sakes.

Or suppose the master were a Christian, and a believer, and the servant a believer too, Would not that excuse him, because in Christ there is neither bond nor free? No, by no means; for Jesus Christ did not come to dissolve the bond of civil relation, but to strengthen it. They that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; for that brotherhood relates only to spiritual privileges, not to any outward dignity or advantage: Those misanderstand and abuse their religion, who make it a pretence for denying the duties that they owe to their relations; nay, rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved. They must think themselves the more obliged to serve them, because the faith and love that speaks men Christians, obliges them to do good; and that is all wherein their service consists. Observe, That it is a great encouragement to us in doing our duty to our relations, if we have reason to think they are faithful and beloved, and partakers of the benefit, i. e. of the benefit of Christianity. Observe, Believing masters and servants are brethren, and partakers of the benefit, for in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28. Timothy is appointed to teach and exhort these things. Observe, That ministers must preach not only the general duties of all, but the duties of particular relations.

2. Paul here warns Timothy to withdraw from those that corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and made it the subject of strife, and debate and controversy. If any man teach otherwise, ver. 3, 4, 5. i. e. do not preach practically; do not teach and exhort that which is for the promoting of serious godliness, if he will not consent to wholesome words, words that have a direct tendency to heal the soul, if he will not consent to these, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, We are not required to consent to any words as wholesome words, but only the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but those we must give our unfeigned assent and consent to, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Observe, The doctrine of our Lord Jesus, is a doctrine according to godliness; it hath a direct tendency to make people godly; but he that doth not do so, is proud, ver. 4. and contentious, ignorant, and doth a great deal of mischief to the church, knowing

knowing *nothing*. Observe, Commonly those are most proud that know least, for with all their knowledge, they do not know themselves, *but dote about questions*. Those who fall off from the plain practical doctrines of Christianity, fall in with controversies, which eat out the life and power of religion; they dote about questions and *strifes of words*, which do a great deal of mischief in the church, are the occasion of *envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings*. When men are not content with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, but will frame notions of their own, and impose them, and that too, in their own words, which man's wisdom teacheth, and not in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. ii. 13. they sow the seeds of all mischief in the church. Hence comes *perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds*, ver. 5. disputes that are all subtilty and no solidity. Observe, Men of corrupt minds are *destitute of the truth*. The reason why mens' minds are corrupt is, because they do not stick to the truth as it is in Jesus. *Supposing that gain is godliness*, i. e. making religion truckle to their secular interest: From such as these Timothy is warned to withdraw himself.

We observe, 1. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are wholesome words, they are the fittest to prevent or heal the church's wounds, as well as to heal a wounded conscience, for Christ hath the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary, *Isa. l. 4.* The words of Christ are the best to prevent ruptures in the church; for none that profess faith in him, will dispute the aptness or authority of his words, who is their lord and teacher. And it hath never gone well with the church, since the words of men have claimed a regard equal to his words, and in some cases a much greater. 2. Whoever doth teach otherwise, and doth not consent to these wholesome words; he is proud, knowing nothing, for pride and ignorance commonly go together. 3. St. Paul sets a brand only on those that consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness; they are proud, knowing nothing, &c. other words more wholesome he knew not. 4. We learn the sad effects of doting upon questions and strifes of words; of such doting about questions cometh envy, strife, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings; when men leave the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, they will never agree in other words, either of their own or other mens' inventions, but will perpetually wrangle and quarrel about them; and this will produce envy, when they see the words of others preferred to those they have adopted for their own; and this will be attended with jealousies and suspicions of one another, called here evil surmisings; then they will proceed to perverse disputings. 5. Such persons who are given to perverse disputings appear to be men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, and who act in this manner for the sake of gain, which is all their godliness, supposing gain to be godliness, contrary to the apostle's judgment, who reckoned godliness great gain. 6. Good ministers and Christians will withdraw themselves from such; come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate, says the Lord: from such withdraw thyself.

6. But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7. For we brought nothing into *this world*, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. 9. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11. But thou, O man of God, flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

From the mention of the abuse which some put upon religion, making it to serve their secular advantages, the apostle takes occasion to shew the excellency of contentment, and the evil of covetousness.

1. The excellency of contentment, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* Those that think Christianity is an advantageous profession for this world, though in the sense they meant, it is false; yet it is undoubtedly true, that though Christianity is the world trade, it is the best calling in the world. Those that make a trade of it merely to serve their turn for this world, will be disappointed and find it a sorry trade; but they that mind it as their calling, and make a business of it, will find it a gainful calling, for it hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. The truth he lays down is, that *godliness with contentment is great gain*. Some read it, godliness with a competency, i. e. if a man have but a little in this world; yet if he have but enough to carry him through it, he needs desire no more, his godliness with that will be his great gain: for a little which a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked, *Psalm xxxvii. 15.* we read it, *godliness with contentment*; godliness is itself great gain, it is profitable to all things, and wherever there is true godliness, there will be contentment, but those that are arrived to the highest pitch of contentment with their godliness, are certainly the easiest, happiest people in this world. *Godliness with contentment*, i. e. Christian's contentment, content must come from principles of godliness, that is a great gain; it is all the wealth in the world. He that is godly is sure to be happy in another world, and if withal he do by contentment accommodate himself to his condition in this world, he hath enough.

Here we have, 1. A Christian's gain, it is godliness with contentment, this is the true way to gain, yea it is gain itself. 2. A Christian's gain is great, it is not like the little gain of worldlings, who are so fond of a little worldly advantage. 3. Godliness is ever accompanied with contentment in a greater or lesser degree: all truly godly people have learned with St. Paul, in whatever state they are to be therewith content, *Phil. iv. 11.* They are content with what God allots for them, well knowing that is best for them. Let us all then endeavour after godliness with contentment.

The reason he gives for it is, *for we brought nothing with us into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*, *ver. 7.* This is a reason why we should be content with a little.

1. Because we can challenge nothing as a debt that is due to us, for we came naked into the world; whatever we have had since, we are obliged to the providence of God for it; but he that gave may take what and when he pleases. We had our beings, our bodies, our lives, which are more than meat, which are more than raiment, when we came into the world, though we came naked and brought nothing with us: may we not then be content while our beings and lives are continued to us, though we have not every thing we would have? We brought nothing with us into this world, and

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yet God provided for us, care was taken of us, we have been fed all our lives long unto this day, and therefore when we are reduced to the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we come into this world, and yet then we were provided for; therefore let us trust in God for the remaining part of our pilgrimage.

2. We shall carry nothing with us out of this world; a shroud, a coffin, and a grave, are all that the richest man in the world can have from his thousands. Therefore why should we covet much? Why should we not be content with a little, because how much soever we have we must leave it behind us? *Eccles. v. 15, 16.*

From hence he infers, *ver. 8. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* Food and a covering including habitation as well as raiment. Observe, If God give us the necessary supports of life, we ought to be content therewith, though we have not the ornaments and delights of it. If nature should be content with a little, grace should be content with less; though we have not dainty food, though we have not costly raiment, if we have but food and raiment convenient for us, we ought to be content: this was Agur's prayer, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*, *Prov. xxx. 8.*

Here we see, 1. The folly of placing our happiness in these things, when we did not bring any thing into this world with us, and we can carry nothing out: what will these do when death shall strip them of their happiness and portion? And they must take an everlasting farewell of all these things on which they have so much doted. They may say with poor Micah, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more, *Judg. xviii. 24.* 2. The necessities of life are the bounds of a true Christian's desire, and with these he will endeavour to be content; his desires are not insatiable; no; a little, a few comforts of this life will serve him, and these he may hope to enjoy, having food and raiment.

2. The evil of covetousness, *ver. 9.* They that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, i. e. that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world, and are resolved, right or wrong, they will have it. It is not said that they are rich, but they that will be rich, that is, that place their happiness in worldly wealth, that covet it inordinately, and are eager and violent in the pursuit of it. They that are such, fall into temptation and a snare, unavoidably, for when the devil sees which way their lusts carry them, he will soon bait his hook accordingly. He knew how fond Achan would be of a wedge of gold, and therefore laid that before him. They fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts.

The apostle supposes, 1. Some will be rich, i. e. they are resolved upon it, nothing short of a great abundance will satisfy. 2. Such will not be safe or innocent, for they will be in danger of ruining themselves for ever; they fall into temptation, and a snare, &c. 3. Worldly lusts are foolish and hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition.

Observe, 4. It is good for us to consider the mischievousness of worldly fleshly lusts. They are foolish, and therefore we should be ashamed of them; hurtful, and therefore we should be afraid of them, especially considering to what degree they are hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition.

The love of money is the root of all evil, *ver. 10.* What sins will not men be drawn to by the love of money? particularly this was at the bottom of the apostacy of many from the faith of Christ; while they coveted money, they erred from the faith: they quitted their Christianity, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1. Observe what is the root of all evil: the love of money; people may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it inordinately, it will push them on to all evil. 2. Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money, which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith: Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, 2 Tim. iv. 10. For the world was dearer to him than Christianity.

Observe, Those that err from the faith pierce themselves with many sorrows: they that depart from God do but treasure up sorrow for themselves.

3. Hence he takes occasion both to caution Timothy against their lusts, and to counsel him to keep in the way of God and his duty, and particularly to fulfil the trust reposed in him as a minister. He addresses himself to him as a man of God. Ministers are men of God, and ought to carry themselves accordingly in every thing. Men employed for God, devoted to his honour more immediately. The prophets under the Old Testament were called men of God.

(1.) He charges Timothy to take heed of the love of money, which had been so pernicious to many, *flee these things*. It is ill becoming any men, but especially men of God, to set their heart upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God.

(2.) To arm him against the love of the world, he directs him to follow that which is good, *follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*. Righteousness in his conversation towards men, godliness towards God, faith and love as living principles, to support him and carry him on in the practice both of righteousness and godliness. They that follow after righteousness and godliness from a principle of faith and love, have need to put on patience and meekness. Patience to bear both the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of men, and meekness wherewith to instruct gainsayers, and pass by the affronts and injuries that are done us.

Observe, It is not enough that men of God flee these things, but they must follow after what is directly contrary thereto; further, what excellent persons men of God are, who follow after righteousness, &c. They are the excellent of the earth, and being acceptable to God, they should be approved of men.

(3.) He exhorts them to do the part of a soldier, *Fight the good fight of faith*. Note, Those that will get to heaven must fight their way thither. There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the opposition of the powers of darkness. Again, It is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good issue; farther it is the fight of faith; we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. 2. Cor. x. 3, 4.

(4.) He exhorts him to lay hold on eternal life. Observe, 1. Eternal life is the crown proposed to us, for our encouragement to war, and to fight the good fight of faith, the good warfare. 2. This we must lay hold on as those that are afraid of coming short of it, and losing it. Lay hold, and take heed of losing our hold.

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown, *Rev. iii. 11.* 3. We are called to the fight, and to lay hold on eternal life. 4. The profession Timothy and all faithful ministers make before many witnesses is a good profession; for they profess and engage to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life; their calling and their own profession oblige them unto this.

13. I give thee charge in the fight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14. That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15. Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16. Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can reproach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 17. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 20. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21. Which some professing, have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

He charges him to keep *this* commandment without spot. That is, the whole work of his ministry, all the trust reposed in him, all the service expected from him, he must keep it without spot, *unrebukable*, i. e. he must carry himself so in his ministry, as that he might not lay himself open to any blame, nor incur any blemish.

What are the motives to move him to this?

1. He gives him a solemn charge, *I give thee a charge in the sight of God, that thou do this*. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day to that God whose eyes are upon us all, who sees what we are, and what we do, *God who quickens all things*, i. e. who hath life in itself, and is the fountain of life. This should quicken us to the service of God, that we serve a God who quickens all things. He charges him before *Christ Jesus*, to whom in a peculiar manner he stood related as a minister of his gospel; who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.

Observe, Christ died not only as a sacrifice, but as a martyr; and he witnessed a good confession when he was arraigned before Pilate, saying, *John xviii. 36, 37. My kingdom is not of this world; I am come to bear witness unto the truth*. That good confession of his before Pilate, *My kingdom is not of this world*, should be effectual to draw off all his followers, both ministers and people, from the love of this world.

2. He minds him of the confession that he himself had made. *Thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*, ver. 1, 2. when he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The obligation of that was still upon him, and he must live up to that, and be quickened by that, to do the work of his ministry.

3. He minds him of Christ's second coming. Keep this commandment, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, i. e. keep it as long as thou livest, till Christ come at death to give thee a discharge. Keep it with an eye to his second coming, when we must all give an account of the talents we have been intrusted with, *Luke xvi. 2*.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will appear, and it will be a glorious appearing, not like his first appearing in the days of his humiliation. 2. Ministers should have an eye to this appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in all their ministrations. 3. Till his appearing they are to keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable.

Mentioning the appearing of Christ as one that loved it, he loves to speak of it, and loves to speak of him who shall then appear. The appearing of Christ is certain, *he shall shew it*; but it is not for us to know the time and season of it, for the Father hath kept that in his own power: Let this suffice us, that in time he shall shew it, in the time that he thinks fit for it.

Concerning Christ and God the Father he here speaks great things:

1. That God is the *only Potentate*, the powers of earthly princes are all derived from him, and depend upon him: The powers that be, are ordained of God, *Rom. xiii. 2*. He is the only Potentate that is absolute and sovereign, and perfectly independent.

2. He is the *blessed* and only Potentate, infinitely happy, and nothing can in the least impair his happiness.

3. He is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. All the kings of the earth derive their power from him, he gave them their crowns, and they hold them under him, and he hath sovereign dominion over them. This is Christ's title, *Rev. xix. 16. Upon his vesture and his thigh*; for he hath a name higher than the kings of the earth.

4. He only had immortality; he only is immortal in himself, and hath immortality, as he is the fountain of it; for the immortality of angels and spirits is derived from him.

5. He dwells in inaccessible light; *Light which no man can approach unto*, i. e. no man can get to heaven, but those whom he pleased to bring thither, and admit into his kingdom.

6. He is invisible; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*. It is impossible that mortal eye should bear the brightness of the divine glory. No man can see God and live.

Having mentioned these glorious attributes, he concludes with a doxology. *To him be honour and power everlasting, Amen*. God having all power and honour to himself, it is our duty to ascribe all honour and power to him.

1. What an evil is sin, when committed against such a God, the blessed and only Potentate? The evil of it rises in proportion to the dignity of him against whom it is committed. 2. Great is the condescension to take notice of such mean and vile creatures as we are: What are we, then, that the blessed God, the King of kings and Lords of lords should seek after us? 3. Blessed are they who are admitted to dwell with this great and blessed Potentate; happy are thy men, says the queen of Sheba to king Solomon, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, *1 Kings x. 8*. Much more happy are they who are allowed to stand before the King of kings. 4. Let us love, adore, and praise the great God; for who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy, *Rev. xv. 4*.

The apostle adds, by way of postscript, a lesson for rich people, ver. 17, 18, 19. Timothy must charge them that are rich to take care of the temptations, and improve the opportunities of their prosperous estate.

1. Caution them to take heed of pride. That is a sin that easily besets rich people, whom the world smiles upon. Charge them *that they be not high-minded*, nor think of themselves above what is meet, nor be puffed up with their wealth.

2. Caution them against vain confidence in their wealth. Charge them that they *trust not in uncertain riches*. Nothing more uncertain than the wealth of this world; many have had much of it one day, and been stripped of all the next. Riches make themselves wings and fly away as an eagle, *Eccl. x. 17*.

3. He must charge them to *trust in God, the living God*; to make him their hope *who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. They that are rich must see God giving them their riches, and giving them to *enjoy them richly*; for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them.

4. He must charge them to do good with what they have, for what is the best estate worth, any more than as it gives a man an opportunity of doing so much the more good? *that they be rich in good works*. Those are truly rich that are in good works: That they be *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*. Not only to do it, but to do it willingly, for *God loves a cheerful giver*.

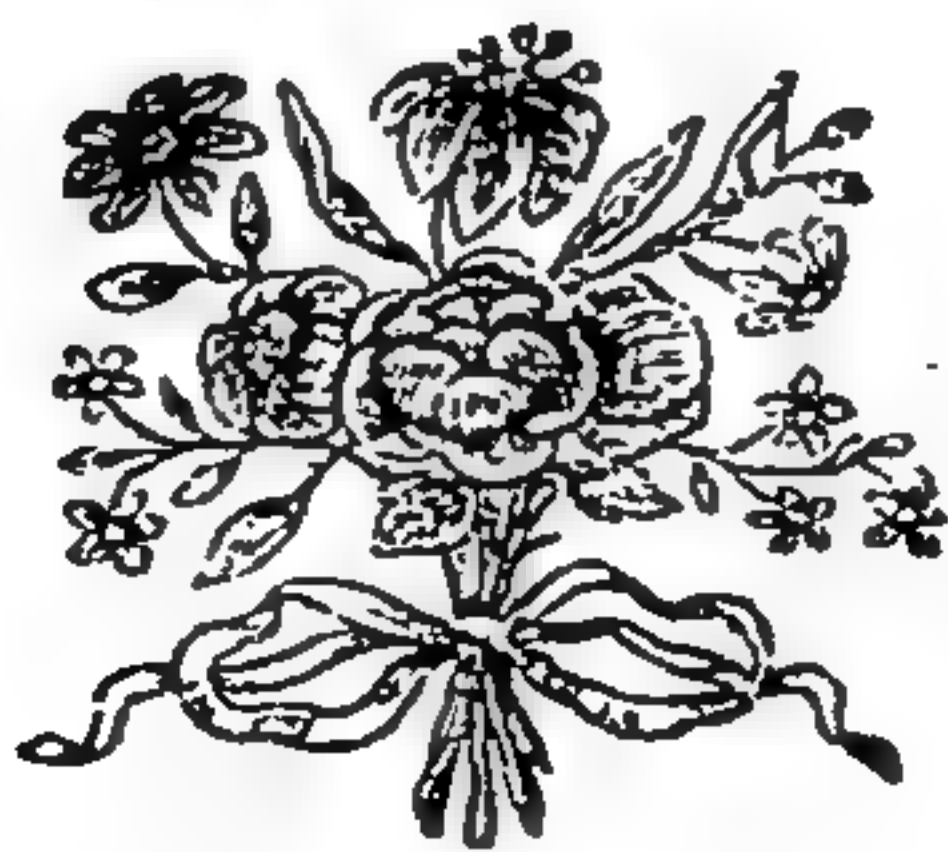
5. He must charge them to think of another world, and prepare for that which is to come by works of charity, *laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come*, that they may take hold on eternal life.

(1.) Ministers must not be afraid of the rich; be they ever so rich, they must speak to them, and charge them. 2. They must caution them against pride and vain confidence in their riches, that they be not high-minded, nor trust, &c. Stir them up to works of piety and charity, *that they do good, &c.* 3. This is the way for the rich to lay up in store for themselves for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life: in the way of well-doing we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, *and eternal life will be the end of all, Rom. ii. 7*.

(2.) Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy, *Keep that which is committed to thy trust*. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he hath to keep. The truth of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, *avoid profane and vain babblings*. Not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babblings, or human learning, which many times opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some that have been very proud of their learning, their *science, which is falsely so called*, have by that been debauched in their principles, and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that.

Observe, 1. Ministers cannot be too earnestly exhorted to keep what is committed to their trust, because it is a great trust lodged with them. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust! *q. d.* I cannot conclude without charging thee again; whatever thou dost be sure keep this trust, for it is too great a trust to be betrayed. 2. Ministers are to avoid babblings, if they would keep what is committed to them, because they are vain and profane. 3. That science that opposes the truth of the gospel, is falsely so called; it is not true science, for if it was, it would approve of the gospel and consent to it. 4. Those who are so fond of such science, are in great danger of erring concerning the faith: they who are for advancing reason above faith, are in danger of leaving faith. Lastly, Our apostle concludes with a solemn prayer and benediction. *Grace be with thee, Amen*. Observe, This is a short, yet comprehensive prayer for our friends, Grace be with them, for grace comprehends in it all that is good, and grace is an earnest, yea a beginning of glory, for wherever God gives grace, he will give glory, and will not withhold any good thing from him that walketh uprightly. Grace be with you all. Amen.

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
 WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
 OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF
St. PAUL to TIMOTHY.

Completed by Mr. Atkinson.

THIS second epistle Paul wrote to Timothy from Rome, when he was a prisoner there and in danger of his life, by these words, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*, chap. 4. ver. 6. It appears that his removal out of this world, in his own apprehension was not far off, especially considering the rage and malice of his persecutors; and that he had been brought before the emperor Nero, which he calls *his first answer when no man stood with him, but all men forsook him*, chap. iv. ver. 16. And interpreters agree that this was the last epistle he wrote.

Where Timothy now was, is not certain. The scope of this epistle somewhat differs from that of the former, not so much relating to his office as an evangelist, as to his personal conduct and behaviour.

C H A P. I.

After this introduction, ver. 1, 2. we have, 1. Paul's sincere love to Timothy, ver. 3—6. 2. Divers exhortations given to him, ver. 6—15. 3. He speaks of Phygellus and Hermogenes, with others, and closes with Onesiphorus, ver. 15 to the end.

1. **PAUL** an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus; 2. To Timothy my dearly beloved son; Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3. I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day: 4. Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy: 5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Here is, 1. The inscription of the epistle: Paul calls himself an *apostle by the will of God*, merely by the good pleasure of God, and by his grace, which he professes himself unworthy of, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, i. e. according to the gospel. The gospel is the promise of life in Jesus Christ; life the end, and Christ the way, John xiv. 6. The life is put into the promise, and both are sure in Christ Jesus the faithful witness; *For all the promises of God in Christ Jesus, are yea, and all amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. He calls Timothy his *beloved son*; Paul had a dear love for him, both because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because as a son with his father he had served with him in the gospel.

We here learn, 1. St. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, as he did not receive the gospel of man, nor was taught it, but had it by the revelation of Jesus Christ, Gal. i. 12. so his commission to be an apostle was not by the will of man, but of God; in the former epistle he says it was by the commandment of God our Saviour, and here by the will of God; God called him to be an apostle. 2. We have the promise of life, blessed be God for it, in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, Tit. i. 2. It is a promise to discover the freeness and certainty of it. 3. This as well as all other promises are in and through Christ Jesus; they all take their rise from the mercy of God in Christ, and they are sure, and we may safely depend on them. 4. The grace, mercy, and peace, which even St. Paul's dearly beloved son Timothy wanted, comes from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord; and therefore the one as well as the other is the giver of these blessings, and ought to be applied to for them. Lastly, The best want these blessings, and they are the best we can ask for our dearly beloved friends, that they may have grace to help them in the time of need, and mercy to pardon what is amiss, and so may have peace with God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Paul's thanksgiving to God for Timothy's faith and holiness: He thanks God that he remembered Timothy in his prayers. Observe, That whatever good we do, and whatever good office we perform for our friends, God must have the glory of it, and we must give him thanks. It is he that puts it into our hearts to remember such and such in our prayers. Paul was much in prayer, he prayed night and day; in all his prayers he was mindful of his friends, he particularly prayed for good ministers, he prayed for Timothy, and had remembrance of him in his prayers night and day; he did this without ceasing; prayer was his constant business, and he never forgot his friends in his prayers as we often do. *Paul served God from his forefathers with a pure conscience*. It was a comfort to him that he was born in God's house, and was of the seed of those that served God; as likewise that he had served him with a pure conscience, according to the best of his light; he had kept a conscience void of offence, and made it his daily exercise to do so, Acts xxiv. 16. *He greatly desired to see Timothy*, out of the affection he had for him, that he might have some conversation with him, being mindful of his tears at their last parting. Timothy was sorry to part with Paul, he wept at parting, and therefore Paul desired to see him again, because he had perceived by that what a true affection he had for him. He thanks God that Timothy kept up the religion of his ancestors, ver. 5. Observe, The entail of religion descended upon Timothy by the mother's side, he had a good mother and a good grandmother. They believed, though his father did not, Acts xvi. It is a comfortable thing when children imitate the faith and holiness in their godly parents, and tread in their steps, 3 John 4. *Dwelt in thy grandmother and thy mother, and I am persuaded that in thee also*. Paul had a very charitable opinion of his friends, was very willing to hope the best concerning them; indeed he had a great deal of reason to believe well of Timothy, for he had *no man like minded*, Phil. ii. 20.

Observe, 1. We are, according to St. Paul, to serve God with a pure conscience, so did his and our forefathers; this is to draw near with a pure

heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. x. 22. 2. In our prayers we are to remember without ceasing our friends, especially the faithful ministers of Christ; St. Paul had remembrance of his dearly beloved son Timothy in his prayers night and day. 3. The faith that dwells in real believers is unfeigned, it is without hypocrisy; it is a faith that will stand the trial, and it dwells in them as a living principle. It was the matter of St. Paul's thanksgiving, that Timothy inherited the faith of his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, and ought to be ours, whenever we see the like; we should rejoice wheresoever we see the grace of God, so did Barnabas, Acts xi. 23, 24. I rejoice greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth, 2 John, 4.

6. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands. 7. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God; 9. Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. 10. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: 11. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12. For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 13. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Here is an exhortation and excitation of Timothy to his duty, ver. 6. *I put thee in remembrance*; the best men need remembrancers; what we know we should be minded of, 2 Pet. iii. 1. *I write this to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance*.

1. He exhorts him to stir up the gift of God that was in him; stir it up as fire under the embers. It is meant of all the gifts and graces that God had given him to qualify him for the work of an evangelist, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the extraordinary gifts that were conferred by the imposition of the apostle's hands. These he must stir up, i. e. he must exercise them, and so encrease them: use gifts and have gifts; to him that hath shall be given, Matt. xxv. 22. he must take all opportunities to use these gifts, and so stir them up, for that is the best way of encreasing them.

Whether the gift of God in Timothy was ordinary or extraordinary, though I incline to the latter, yet it must stir it up, otherwise it will decay. Further you see that gift was in him by the putting on of the apostle's hands, which I take to be distinct from his ordination, which was performed by the hands of the presbytery, 1 Tim. iv. 14. And it is likely Timothy had the Holy Ghost, in his extraordinary gifts and graces conferred on him by the laying on of the apostle's hands, (for I reckon none but the apostles had the power of giving the Holy Ghost;) and afterwards, being thus richly furnished for the work of the ministry, was ordained by the presbytery.

The great hindrance of usefulness in the encrease of our gifts is slavish fear, therefore he warns him against this, *God hath not given us the spirit of fear*, ver. 7. It was through base fear that the evil servant buried his talent, and did not trade with it, Matt. xxv. 25. Now God hath therefore armed us against the spirit of fear, by often bidding us *fear not*: fear not the face of man; fear not the dangers you may meet with in the way of your duty; God hath delivered us from the spirit of fear, and hath given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The spirit of power, i. e. of courage and resolution, to encounter difficulties and dangers: the spirit of love to God, which will carry us through the opposition we may meet with, as Jacob made nothing of the hard service he was to endure for Rachael. The spirit of love to God will set us above the fear of man, and all the hurt that man can do. And the spirit of a sound mind, or quietness of mind, a peaceable enjoyment of ourselves, for we are oftentimes discouraged in our way and work by the creatures of our own fancy and imagination, which a sober, solid thinking mind would obviate, and would easily answer.

The

The Spirit God gives to his ministers, is not a fearful but a courageous Spirit; it is a Spirit of power, for they speak in his name who hath all power both in heaven and earth; and it is a Spirit of love; for love to God and the souls of men must inflame ministers in all their service; and it is a Spirit of a sound mind, for they speak the words of truth and soberness.

2. He exhorts him to count upon afflictions, and get ready for them: *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.* Be not thou ashamed of the gospel, of the testimony thou hast borne to it. The gospel of Christ is what we have none of us reason to be ashamed of. We must not be ashamed of those that are suffering for the gospel of Christ. Timothy must not be ashamed of good old Paul, though he was now in bonds. As he must not be afraid of suffering himself, so he must not be afraid of owning those that were sufferers for the cause of Christ.

1. The gospel is a testimony of our Lord; in and by that he bears testimony of himself to us, and by professing our adherence to it, we bear testimony of him and for him. 2. St. Paul was the Lord's prisoner, his prisoner, for his sake, he was bound with a chain, *Eph. iv. 1.* 3. We have no reason to be ashamed either of the testimony of our Lord, nor of his prisoners; if we are ashamed of either now, Christ will be ashamed of us hereafter; but *be thou partaker of the affliction of the gospel according to the power of God; i. e. expect afflictions for the gospel's sake, prepare for them, count upon them, be willing to take thy lot with the suffering saints in this world.* *Be partaker of the affliction of the gospel; or, as it may be read, do thou suffer with the gospel.* Not only sympathize with those that do suffer for it, but be ready to suffer with them, and suffer like them. If at any time the gospel be in distress, he that hopes for life and salvation by it, will be content to suffer with it. Observe, 1. Then we are likely to bear afflictions well when we fetch strength and power from God to enable us to bear them: be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God. 2. All Christians, but especially ministers, must expect afflictions and persecutions for the sake of the gospel. 3. These shall be proportioned according to the power of God (*1 Cor. x. 13.*) resting upon us.

Mentioning God and the gospel, he takes notice what great things God hath done for us by the gospel, *ver. 9, 10.* To encourage him to suffer, he urges two considerations.

(1.) He shews him the nature of that gospel which he was called to suffer for, and the glorious and gracious designs and purposes of it. It is usual with Paul when he mentions Christ and the gospel of Christ, to digress from his subject, and enlarge upon them, so full was he of that which is all our salvation, and ought to be all our desire.

Observe, 1. The gospel aims at our salvation; *he hath saved us, and we must not think much to suffer for that which we hope to be saved by.* He hath begun to save us, and will complete it in due time; for God calls those things that be not, *i. e.* that are not yet completed as though they were, *Rom. iv. 17.* therefore he says, who hath saved us.

2. It is designed for our sanctification; *and called us with a holy calling, i. e. called us to holiness.* Christianity is a calling, a holy calling, it is the calling wherewith we are called, *i. e.* it is the calling to which we are called to labour in it. Observe, All that shall be saved hereafter are sanctified now. Wherever the calling of the gospel is an effectual call it is found to be an holy call, making those holy who are effectually called.

3. The rise of it is the free grace and eternal purpose of God in Jesus Christ. If we had merited it, it had been hard to suffer for it; but our salvation by it is of free grace, and not according to our works, and therefore we must not think much to suffer for it. This grace is said to be given us *before the world began, i. e.* in the purpose and design of God from all eternity; *in Christ Jesus, for all the gifts that come from God to sinful man, come in and through Christ Jesus.*

4. The gospel is the manifestation of this purpose and grace, *by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of all his gracious purposes; and by his appearing, that gracious purpose was made manifest to us.* Did Jesus Christ suffer for it, and shall we think much to suffer for it?

5. By the gospel of Christ death is abolished; *he hath abolished death, not only weakened it, but taken it out of the way, hath broken the power of death over us; by taking away sin, he hath abolished death, for the sting of death is sin, 1 Cor. xv. 56.* in altering the property of it, and breaking the power of it.

Death now of an enemy is become a friend, and is the gate by which we pass out of a troublesome, vexatious, sinful world, into a world of perfect peace and purity; and the power thereof is broken, for death doth not triumph over those who believe the gospel, but they triumph over it. O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? *1 Cor. xv. 55.*

6. He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, *i. e.* he hath shewed us another world, more clearly than it was before discovered under any former dispensation, and the happiness of that world; the certain recompence of our obedience by faith: we all with open face, as in a glass, behold the glory of God. He hath brought it to light, not only set it before us, but offered it to us by the gospel.

Let us value the gospel more than ever, as it is that whereby life and immortality is brought to light, for herein it hath pre-eminence above all former discoveries; so that it is the gospel of life and immortality, as it discovers them to us, and directs us in the ready way that leads thereto, as well as proposes the most weighty motives to excite our endeavours in seeking after glory, honour, and immortality.

(2.) Consider the example of blessed Paul, *ver. 11, 12.* He was appointed to preach the gospel, and particularly appointed to teach the Gentiles. He thought it a cause worth suffering for, and why should not Timothy think so too? No man need to be afraid or ashamed to suffer for the cause of the gospel. *I am not ashamed, saith Paul, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

Observe, 1. Good men often suffer many things for the best cause in the world; for the which cause I suffer these things: that is, for my preaching, and adhering to the gospel. 2. They need not to be ashamed, the cause will bear them out, but those that oppose it shall be clothed with shame. Observe, 3. Those that trust in Christ, know whom they have trusted. He speaks with a holy triumph and exultation, as much as to say, I stand on firm ground. I know I have lodged the great trust in the hands of the best trustee. *And am persuaded, &c.* What must we commit to Christ? Why the salvation of our souls, and their preservation to the heavenly kingdom, and what we so commit to him he will keep. There is a day coming when our souls will be enquired after: man! woman! thou hadst a soul committed to thee, What hast thou done with it? To whom was it offered, to God or Satan? How was it employed, in the service of sin, or in the service of Christ? There is a day coming, and it will be a very solemn and awful day, when we must give an account of our stewardship, *Luke xvi. 2.* give an account of our souls: Now if by an active obedient faith we commit it to Jesus Christ, we may be sure he is able to keep it, and it shall be forthcoming to our comfort in that day.

3. He exhorts him to hold fast the form of sound words, *ver. 13.*

1. *Have a form of sound words.* So it may be read. A short form, a catechism, an abstract of the first principles of religion, according to the scriptures; a scheme of sound words, a brief summary of the Christian faith, in a proper method, drawn out by thyself from the holy scriptures for thy own use; or rather, by the form of sound words, I understand the holy scriptures themselves.

2. Having it, hold it fast, remember it, retain it, stick to it. Adhere to that in opposition to all heresies and false doctrine, which corrupt the Christian faith. Hold that fast which thou hast heard of me. Paul was divinely inspired. It is good sticking to those forms of sound words which we have in the scriptures, for those we are sure were divinely inspired. That is sound speech which cannot be condemned, *Titus ii. 8.* But how must it be held fast? *in faith and love, i. e.* assent to it as a faithful saying and bid it welcome as worthy of all acceptance. Hold it fast in a good heart, that is the ark of the covenant, in which the tables both of law and gospel are most safely and profitably deposited, *Psal. cxix. 11.* Faith and love must go together; it is not enough to believe the sound words, and to give an assent to them, but we must love them, believe their truth, and love their goodness, and we must propagate the form of sound words in love, speaking the truth in love, *Eph. iv. 15.* Faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; *i. e.* it must be Christian faith and love; faith and love fastening upon Jesus Christ in and by whom God speaks to us and we to him. Timothy as a minister must hold fast the form of sound words for the benefit of others. *Of healing words, so it may be read; there is a healing virtue in the word of God, he sent his word and healed them.* To the same purpose is that, *ver. 14.* *That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.* That good thing was the form of sound words, the Christian doctrine which was committed to Timothy in his baptism and education as he was a Christian, and in his ordination as he was a minister.

The Christian doctrine is a trust committed to us; it is committed to Christians in general, but to ministers in particular; it is a good thing of unspeakable value in itself, and that will be of unspeakable advantage to us. It is a good thing indeed, for it is an inestimable jewel, for it discovers to us the unsearchable riches of Christ, *Eph. iii. 8.* It is committed to us, to be preserved pure and intire, and to be transmitted to those that shall come after us, and we must keep it, and not contribute any thing to the corrupting of its purity, the weakening of its power, or the diminishing of its perfection. *Keep it by the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us.* Observe, Even those that are never so well taught cannot keep what they have learned, no more than they could at first learn it, without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. We must not think to keep it by our own strength, but keep it by the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost dwells in all good ministers and Christians; they are his temples, and he enables them to keep the gospel pure and uncorrupt, and yet they must use their best endeavours to keep this good thing, for the assistance and indwelling of the Holy Ghost doth not exclude men's endeavours, but they well consist together.

15. This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. 16. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. 17. But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. 18. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: And in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Having exhorted Timothy to hold fast, &c. *ver. 13, 14.* the apostle mentions, 1. The apostasy of divers from the doctrine of Christ, *ver. 15.* It seems in the best and purest ages of the church, there were those that had embraced the Christian faith, and yet afterwards revolted from it, nay there were many such. He doth not say that they were turned away from the doctrine of Christ, though it should seem they were, but they were turned away from him, turned their backs upon him, and disowned him in the time of his distress. And should we wonder at it, when many turned their backs on a much better than St. Paul; I mean the Lord Jesus Christ, *John vi. 66.*

2. He mentions the constancy of one that adhered to him, that was Onesiphorus, *for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain, ver. 16.* Observe, 1. What kindness Onesiphorus had shewed to Paul: *He refreshed him, he oft refreshed him with his letters and counsels, and comforts, and he was not ashamed of my chain.* Was not ashamed of him, notwithstanding the disgrace he was now under. He was kind to him not once or twice, but often; not only when he was at Ephesus among his own friends, but when Onesiphorus was at Rome; he took care to seek Paul out very diligently and found him, *ver. 17.* Observe, That a good man will seek opportunities of doing good, and will not shun any that offer. At Ephesus he had ministered to him, and been very kind to him, Timothy knew it.

2. Now Paul returns his kindness, *ver. 16—18.* He that receives a prophet, shall have a prophet's reward. He repays him with his prayers, *the Lord give mercy unto Onesiphorus.* It is like Onesiphorus was now absent, it is probable he was now with Paul, and he prays that his house might be kept during his absence.

Though the Papists will have it he was now dead; and from his praying for him, that he might find mercy, they conclude the warrantableness of praying for the dead, but who told them that Onesiphorus was dead; and can it be safe to ground a doctrine and practice of such importance, on a mere supposition, and very great uncertainty?

He prays for Onesiphorus himself, as well as for his house, *that he might find mercy in that day,* in the day of death and of judgment, when Christ will account all the good offices done to his poor members as done to himself. Observe, 1. The day of death and judgment is an awful day that may be emphatically called the day. 2. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to find mercy of the Lord in that day, when those that have shewed no mercy, will have judgment without mercy. 3. The best Christians will want mercy in that day, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Jude 21.* 4. If you would have mercy then you must seek for it now of the Lord. 5. It is of and from the Lord, we must have mercy; for unless the Lord hath mercy on us, in vain will be the pity and compassion of men or angels. 6. We are to seek and ask for mercy of the Lord, who is the giver and bestower of it, for the Lord Christ hath satisfied justice, that mercy might be displayed. We are to come to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Finally, The best thing we can ask, either for ourselves or our friends, is that the Lord will grant to them, that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day when they must

must pass out of time into eternity, and exchange this world for the other, and appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; the Lord then grant unto all of us, that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter our apostle gives Timothy many exhortations and directions, which may be of great use to others both ministers and Christians, for whom they were designed as well as for him. 1. He encourages him in his work, shewing him from whence he must fetch help, ver. 1. 2. He must take care of a succession in the ministry, that the office might not die with him, ver. 2. 3. He exhorts him to constancy and perseverance in this work as a soldier, and as an husbandman, considering what would be the end of all his sufferings, &c. ver. 3-15. 4. He must shun profane and vain babblings, 16, 17. 18. for they will be pernicious and mischievous. 5. He speaketh of the foundation of God which standeth sure, ver. 19-21. 6. What is he to avoid, youthful lusts, and foolish and unlearned questions; and what to do, ver. 22. to the end.

1. **T**HOU therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 3. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4. No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. 5. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 6. The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits. 7. Consider what I say: and the Lord gave thee understanding in all things.

Here, 1. Paul encourages Timothy to constancy and perseverance in his work; ver. 1. *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* Those that have work to do for God, must stir up themselves to do it, and strengthen themselves for it. Being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus may be understood.

1. In opposition to the weakness of grace. Where there is the truth of grace, there must be a labouring after the strength of grace. As our trial increaseth we had need to grow stronger and stronger in that which is good. Our faith stronger, our resolution stronger, our love to God, and Christ stronger.

2. In opposition to our being stronger in our own strength. Be strong, not confiding in thy own sufficiency, but in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Compare Eph. vi. 10. *Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.* When Peter promised rather to die for Christ than to deny him, he was strong in his own strength; had he been strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus he had kept his standing better.

1. There is grace in Christ Jesus; for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, John i. 17. There is grace enough in him for all of us. 2. We must be strong in this grace, not in ourselves, in our own strength, or in the grace we have already received, but in the grace that is in him, and that is the way to be strong in grace. 3. As a father exhorteth his son, so doth St. Paul exhort Timothy with great tenderness and affection: thou therefore my son, &c.

Timothy must count upon sufferings, even unto blood, and therefore,

1. He must train up others to succeed him in the ministry of the gospel, ver. 2. 1. He must instruct others and train them up for the ministry; and so commit to them the things which he had had. 2. He must ordain them to the ministry, lodge the gospel as a trust in their hands, and so commit to them the things which he had heard. Two things he must have an eye to in ordaining ministers.

1. Their fidelity and integrity; commit them to *faithful men*, that will sincerely aim at the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the welfare of souls, and the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer among men. 2. Their ministerial ability. They must not only be knowing themselves, but be able to teach others also, and be apt to teach.

Here we have, 1. The things Timothy was to commit to others; what he had heard of the apostle among many witnesses; he must not deliver any thing besides; and what St. Paul delivered to him and others, he had received of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. He was to commit them as a trust, as a sacred depositum, which they are to keep, and to transmit pure and uncorrupt unto others. 3. Those to whom he was to commit these things must be faithful; i. e. trusty men, who were skilful to teach others. 4. Though men were both faithful and able to teach others, yet these things must be committed to them by Timothy a minister, a man in office; for none must intrude themselves into the ministry, but must have these things committed to them by those already in that office.

2. He must endure hardness, ver. 3. *Thou therefore, &c.* 1. All Christians, but especially ministers, are *soldiers of Jesus Christ*; they fight under his banner, in his cause; and against his enemies, for he is the captain of our salvation, Heb. ii. 10.

2. The soldiers of Jesus Christ must approve themselves good soldiers; faithful to their captain, resolute in his cause, and must not give over fighting till they are made more than conquerors, through him that loved him, Rom. viii. 37.

3. Those that would approve themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must endure hardness, i. e. we must expect it, and count upon it in this world, must endure and accustom ourselves to it, and bear it patiently when he comes, and not be moved by it from our integrity.

3. He must not entangle himself in the affairs of this world, ver. 4. A soldier, when he is lifted, leaves his calling, and all the business of it, that he may attend to his captain's orders. If we have given up ourselves to be Christ's soldiers, we must sit loose to this world, and though there is no remedy, but we must employ ourselves in the affairs of this life while we are here: we have something to do here; yet we must not entangle ourselves with those affairs, so as by them to be diverted, and drawn aside from our duty to God, and the great concerns of our Christianity. They that will war the good warfare must sit loose to this world, *that we may please him who hath chosen us to be his soldiers.* Observe, The great care of a soldier should be to please his general; so the great care of a Christian should be to please Christ, to approve ourselves to him.

Observe farther, The way to please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers is not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life; but to be free from such entanglements as would hinder us in our holy warfare.

4. We must see to it that in warning our spiritual warfare we go by rule;

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we observe the laws of war, ver. 5. *If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully.* We are striving for mastery, to get the mastery of our lusts and corruptions, to excel in that which is good, but we cannot expect the prize unless we observe the laws. In doing that which is good we must take care that we do it in a right manner, that our good may not be evil spoken of.

We observe here, 1. A Christian is to strive for mastery, he must aim at mastering his own lusts and corruptions. 2. Yet he must strive according to the laws given to him, he must strive lawfully. 3. Those that do so, shall be crowned at last, after a complete victory is obtained.

5. We must be willing to wait for a recompence, ver. 6. *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.* Or, as it should be read, The husbandman labouring, first must partake of the fruits, as appears by comparing it with James v. 7. If we would be partakers of the fruits, we must labour: if we would gain the prize, we must run the race.

And farther we must first labour as the husbandmen doth with diligence and patience, before we are partakers of the fruit; we must do the will of God, before we receive the promises, for which reason we have need of patience, Heb. x. 36.

Ver. 7. *Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.* Here,

1. Paul commands Timothy to consider these things that he admonished him about. Timothy must be minded to use his considering faculties about the things of God. Consideration is as necessary to a good conversation, as to sound conversion.

2. He prays for him, *the Lord give thee understanding in all things.* Observe, That it is God that gives understanding. The most intelligent men need more and more of this gift. If he that gave the revelation in the word, doth not give the understanding in the heart, we are nothing.

And together with our prayers for others, that the Lord would give them understanding in all things we must exhort and stir them up to consider what we say, for consideration is the way to understand, remember and practise what we hear or read.

8. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel: 9. Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. 10. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11. *It is a faithful saying:* for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: If we deny him he also will deny us: 13. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

To encourage Timothy, in suffering, the apostle puts him in mind of the resurrection of Christ. Ver. 8. *Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.* This is the great proof of his divine mission, and therefore a great confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion, and the consideration of it should make us faithful to our Christian profession, and should particularly encourage us in suffering for it. Let suffering saints remember this.

Observe, We are to look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, Heb. xii. 2. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, heartily believed and rightly considered, will support a Christian under all sufferings in the present life.

2. Another thing to encourage him in suffering was, that he had Paul for an example, ver. 9. *wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer,* and let not Timothy the son expect any better treatment than Paul the father. Paul was a man that did good, and yet suffered as an evil doer; we must not think it strange if those that do well fare ill in this world, and if the best of men meet with the worst of treatment; but this was his comfort, *that the word of God is not bound.* Persecuting powers may silence ministers and restrain them, but they cannot hinder the operation of the word of God upon men's hearts and consciences; they cannot be bound by any human force. This might encourage Timothy not to be afraid of bonds for the testimony of Jesus; for the word of Christ, which ought to be dearer to him than liberty, or life itself, should in the issue suffer nothing by those bonds.

Here we see, 1. The good apostle's treatment in the world. I suffer trouble, to this he was called and appointed. 2. The pretence and colour under which he suffered. I suffer as an evil doer, so the Jews said to Pilate concerning Christ, if he was not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up to thee, John xviii. 30. 3. The real and true cause of his suffering trouble as an evil doer, wherein, i. e. in or for the sake of the gospel. 4. The apostle suffered trouble unto bonds, and afterwards he resisted unto blood, striving against sin, Heb. xii. 2. Though the preachers of the word are often bound, yet the word is never bound.

Ver. 10. *I endure all things for the elect's sake.* Observe, That good ministers may and should encourage themselves in the hardest services and the hardest sufferings with this, that God will certainly bring good to his church, and benefit to his elect out of them, *That they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.* Next to the salvation of our own souls we should be willing to do and suffer any thing to promote the salvation of the souls of others.

Observe farther, The elect are designed to obtain salvation; God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation, 1 Thess. v. 9. Again, this salvation is in Christ Jesus, in him as the fountain, the purchaser and giver of it, and it is accompanied with eternal glory: there is no salvation in Christ Jesus without it. Lastly, The sufferings of our apostle were for the elect's sake, for their confirmation and encouragement.

3. Another thing with which he encourages Timothy is, the prospect of a future state.

1. Those that faithfully adhere to Christ and to his truths and ways, whatever it costs them, will certainly have the advantage of it in another world. *If we be dead with him, we shall live with him,* ver. 11. If in conformity to Christ we be dead to this world, and the pleasures, profits, and honours of it, we shall go to live with him in a better world, to be for ever with him. Nay, though we be called out to suffer for him, we shall not lose by that. They that suffer for Christ on earth, shall reign with Christ in heaven, ver. 12. They that suffered with David in his humiliation, were preferred with him in his exaltation: So it will be with the Son of David.

2. It is at our peril if we prove unfaithful to him. *If we deny him, he also will deny us.* If we deny him before man, he will deny us before his Father, Matt. x. 33. And that man must needs be for ever miserable whom Christ disowns at last.

This will certainly be the issue, whether we believe it or no, ver. 13. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.* Faithful to his threatenings, faithful to his promises, neither one or the other shall fall to the ground, no not the least jot nor tittle of them. If he be faithful to Christ, he will certainly be faithful to us. If we be false to him, he will be faithful to his threatenings; *he cannot deny himself.* cannot recede from any word that he hath spoken; for he is yea, and amen, the faithful witness.

Observe, 1. Our being dead with Christ precedes our living with him, and is connected with it, and the one is in order to the other, so our suffering for him is the way to reign with him. You that have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, *Matt. xix. 28.* 2. This is a faithful saying, and may be depended on, and ought to be believed. But, 3. If we deny him out of fear, or shame, or for the sake of some temporal advantage, he will deny and disown us, and will not deny himself but will continue faithful to his word when he threatens, as well as when he promises.

14. Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. 15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus; 18. Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrown the faith of some.

Having thus encouraged Timothy to suffer, he comes in the next place to direct him in his work.

1. He must make it his business to edify those that were under his charge, to put *them* in remembrance of those things which they did already know, for that is the work of ministers, not to tell people that which they never knew before, but to put them in mind of that which they do know, *charging them that they strive not about words.* Observe, Those that are disposed to strive, commonly strive about matters of very small moment. Strifes of words are very destructive to the things of God. That they strive not about words to no profit. If people did but consider of what little use most of the controversies in religion are, they would not be so zealous in their strifes of words to the subverting of the hearers, to the drawing them away from the great things of God, and occasioning unchristian heats and animosities, by which truth is often in danger of being lost.

Observe, People are very prone to strive about words, and such strife never answers any other ends but to shake some and subvert others; they are not only useless but they are very hurtful, and therefore ministers are to charge them that they do not strive about words, and then they are most likely to be regarded; when they charge them before the Lord, i. e. in his name and from his word; when they produce their warrant for what they say.

Ver. 15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God. Observe, The care of ministers must be to approve themselves unto God, and to be accepted of him, and to shew that they are so approved unto God. In order thereto there must be constant care and industry; study to shew thyself such a one, a workman that needs not be ashamed. Ministers must be workmen, they have work to do and they must take pains in it; workmen that are either unskillful or unfaithful, or lazy, have need to be ashamed, but those that mind their business, and keep to their work, are workmen that need not be ashamed. And what is their work? It is *rightly to divide the word of truth*: Not to invent a new gospel, but rightly to divide the gospel that is committed to their trust. To speak terror to those to whom terror belongs, comfort to whom comfort; to give to every one *their portion in due season*, *Matt. xxiv. 45.*

Observe here, 1. The word which ministers preach is the word of truth, for the author of it is the God of truth. 2. It requires great wisdom, study, and care, to divide this word of truth rightly; Timothy must study in order to do this well.

He must take heed of that which would be a hindrance to him in his work, ver. 16.

1. He must take heed of error, *shun profane and vain babblings.* The heretics that boasted of their notions and their arguments, thought their performances such as might recommend themselves, but the apostle calls them *profane and vain babblings.* And when once men take to be fond of such they will increase unto more ungodliness. The way of error is down-hill, one absurdity being granted or contended for, a thousand follow. *Their word will eat as doth a canker or gangrene,* i. e. when errors or heresies come into the church, the infecting of one often proves the infecting of many, or the infecting of the same person with one error often proves the infecting of him with many errors. Upon this occasion the apostle instances in some that had lately advanced some erroneous doctrines, *Hymeneus and Philetus.* He names these corrupt teachers; by which he sets a brand upon them to their perpetual infamy, and warns all people against hearkening to them; they have *erred concerning the truth*; i. e. concerning one of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, which is *truth.* The resurrection of the dead is one of the great doctrines of Christ. Now see the subtlety of the serpent and the serpent's seed. They did not deny the resurrection, for that had been boldly and avowedly to confront the word of Christ, but they put a corrupt interpretation upon that true doctrine, saying that the resurrection is past already; i. e. that what Christ spoke concerning the resurrection is to be understood mystically and by way of allegory, that must be meant of a spiritual resurrection only. It is true there is a spiritual resurrection, but from thence to infer that there will not be a true and real resurrection of the body at the last day, is to dash one truth of Christ in pieces against another. By this they *overthrow the faith of some*; i. e. took them off from the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and if there be no resurrection of the dead, no future state, no recompence of our services and sufferings in another world, we are of all men the most miserable. 1 Cor. xv. 19. What takes away the doctrine of a future state overthrows the faith of Christians. The apostle had largely disproved this error, 1 Cor. xv. and therefore doth not here enter into the arguments against it.

1. The babblings Timothy was to shun, were profane and vain, they were empty shadows and led to profaneness, *for they will increase unto more ungodliness.* 2. Error is very fruitful and productive, and on that account the more dangerous, it will eat like a gangrene. 3. When men err concerning the truth they always endeavour to have some plausible pretence for it; Hymeneus and Philetus did not deny a resurrection, but pretended it was already past. 4. Error especially that affects the foundation, will overthrow the faith of some.

19. Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 20. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Here we see what we may comfort ourselves with in reference to this, and the little errors and heresies that both infect and infect the church, and do mischief.

1. It may be a great comfort to us, that the unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of none effect. Though the faith of some particular persons be overthrown, yet *the foundation of God standeth sure*, ver. 19. it is not possible they should deceive the elect. Or it may be meant of the truth itself which they do impugn. All the attacks which the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ cannot shake it: it stands firm and weathers all the storms which have been raised against it. The prophets and apostles, i. e. the doctrine of the Old and New Testament is still firm, and this hath a seal with two mottoes upon it, one on the one side, the other on the other, as is usual in a broad seal.

1. One speaks our comfort, that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not; knows them, that is, he owns them, so knows them that he will never lose them. Though the faith of some be overthrown, yet the Lord is said to know the ways of the righteous, *Psal. i. 6.* yet not the faith of any whom God hath chosen.

Another speaks our duty, that every one that names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. Those that would have the comfort of the privilege must make conscience of the duty. If the name of Christ be called upon us, we must depart from iniquity, else he will not own us; he will tell us in the great day, *Matt. vii. 22. Depart from me, I never knew ye, ye workers of iniquity.*

Observe, 1. Whatever errors are introduced in the church the foundation of God standeth sure, his purpose can never be defeated. 2. God hath some in the church, which are his, and which he knows to be his. Professing Christians name the name of Christ, are called by his name, and therefore are bound to depart from iniquity, *for Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, Tit. ii. 14.*

2. Another thing that may comfort us is, that though there be some whose faith is overthrown, yet there are others who keep their integrity and hold it fast, ver. 20. *In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, &c.* The church of Christ is a great house, a well-furnished house; now the furniture of this house is some of it of great value, as the plate in a house: others of small value and put to mean uses, as the vessels of wood and earth; so it is in the church of God. There are some professors of religion that are like the vessels of wood and earth, they are vessels of dishonour; but at the same time all are not vessels of dishonour, there are *vessels of gold and silver*, that are vessels of honour, *that are sanctified and meet for the master's use.* When we are discouraged by the badness of some, we must encourage ourselves by the consideration of the goodness of others. Now we should see to it that we be the vessels of honour; we must *purge ourselves from those corrupt opinions* that may be sanctified for our master's use.

1. Observe, In the church there are some vessels of honour and some of dishonour: there are some vessels of mercy and other vessels of wrath. *Rom. ix. 22, 23.* Some dishonour the church by their corrupt opinions and wicked lives. And others honour and credit it by their exemplary conversation. 2. A man must purge himself from these before he can be a vessel of honour or meet for his master's use. 3. Every vessel must be fit for his master's use; every one in the church whom God approves must be devoted to his master's service and meet for his use.

Observe, 4. Sanctification in the heart is our preparation for every good work. The tree must be made good and then the fruit will be good.

22. Flee all youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 24. And the servant of the Lord must not strive: but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. 26. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Timothy must take care of *youthful lusts*, ver. 22. though he was a holy good man, very much mortified to the world, yet Paul thought it necessary to caution him against youthful lusts, *flee them*, take all possible care and pains to keep thyself pure from them. The lusts of the flesh are youthful lusts, which people must carefully watch against, and the best must not be secure. He prescribes an excellent remedy against youthful lusts, *follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, &c.*

Observe, 1. Youthful lusts are very dangerous, for which reason even hopeful young people should be warned of them, for they war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11. 2. That the exciting of our graces will be the extinguishing of our corruptions; the more we follow that which is good, the faster and the further we shall flee from that which is evil. Righteousness, and faith, and love, will be excellent antidotes against youthful lusts. Holy love will cure impure lust. Follow peace with them that call on the Lord. The keeping of the communion of saints, will take us off from all fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. See the character of Christians, they are such as *call on the Lord Jesus Christ, out of a pure heart.* Observe, Christ is to be prayed to. It is the character of all Christians that they call upon him; but our prayers to God and Christ are not acceptable or successful, except they come out of a pure heart.

2. He cautions him against contention, and to prevent that, ver. 23, cautions them against *foolish and unlearned questions*, that tend to no benefit, strifes of words. They that advanced them, and doted upon them, thought themselves wise and learned, but Paul calls them foolish and unlearned. The mischief of these is, that they *do gender strifes*, i. e. that they breed debates and quarrels among Christians and ministers. It is very remarkable how often and with what seriousness the apostle cautions Timothy against the disputes in

in religion, which surely was not without some such design as this, to shew us that religion consisteth more in believing and practising what God requires, than in subtle disputes.

Now the servant of the Lord must not strive, ver. 24. Nothing worse becomes the servant of the Lord Jesus, who himself did not strive nor cry, *Matt. xii. 19.* but was himself a pattern of meekness and mildness and gentleness to all, than of strife and contention.

The servant of the Lord must be gentle to all men, and thereby shew that he is himself subject to the commanding power of that holy religion which he is employed in preaching and propagating; apt to teach. Those are unapt to teach that are apt to strive, and are fierce and forward. Ministers must be patient, bearing with evil, and in meekness instructing, ver. 25. Not only those that subject themselves, but those that oppose themselves.

Observe, 1. Those that oppose themselves to the truth are to be instructed, for instruction is the scripture-method of dealing with the erroneous, that is more likely to convince them of their errors, than fire and faggot; he does not bid us kill their bodies, under pretence of saving their souls. 2. Such who oppose themselves are to be instructed in meekness, for our Lord is meek and lowly, *Matt. xi. 29.* and this agrees well with the character of the servant of the Lord, ver. 24. *He must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient.*

This is the way to convey truth in its light and power, and to overcome evil with good, *Rom. xii. 21.* And that which ministers must have in their eyes, in instructing those that oppose themselves, must be their recovery. *If God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

Observe, 1. That repentance is God's gift. 2. It is a gift with a peradventure, in the case of those that oppose themselves, and therefore, though we are not apt to despair of the grace of God, yet we must take heed of presuming upon it. *To the acknowledging of the truth.* Observe, 3. The same God who gives us the discovery of the truth, doth by his grace bring us to the acknowledging of it, otherwise our hearts would continue in rebellion against it, for we are to confess with our mouths, as well as to believe with our hearts, *Rom. xiii. 9, 10.* And thus sinners recover themselves out of the snare of the devil; see here, ver. 26.

1. The misery of sinners; they are in the snare of the devil, and are led captive by him at his will. They are slaves to the work of unbelief, he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, *Eph. ii. 2.*

They are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil's; they are as fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare. Further, They are under Ham's curse, a servant of servants shall he be, *Gen. ix. 25.* they are slaves to him who is but a slave and vassal.

2. The happiness of those that repent; they recover themselves out of this snare, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, the snare is broken and they have escaped; and the greater the danger, the greater the deliverance. When sinners repent, they who before were led captive by the devil at his will, come to be led into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and have their wills melted into the will of the Lord Jesus. The good Lord recover us all out of the snare.

C H A P. III.

He foretels Timothy what the last days would be, with the reasons thereof, ver. 1—9. 2. Prescribes various remedies against them, ver. 10. to the end, particularly his own example; but thou hast fully known my doctrine, &c. and the knowledge of the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, and will be the best antidote against the corruptions of the times we live in. In this chapter Paul tells Timothy how bad others would be, and therefore how good he should be; and this we should make of the badness of others, thereby to engage us to hold our own integrity so much the faster.

1. **T**HIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3. Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. 4. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Timothy must not think it strange if there were in the church bad men, for the net of the gospel was to inclose both good fish and bad, *Matt. xiii. 47, 48.* Jesus Christ had foretold it, *Matt. xxiv.* that there would come seducers, and therefore we must not be offended at it, nor think the worse of religion or the church for it.

Even in gold ore there will be dross, and a great deal of chaff among the wheat when it lies on the floor. Timothy must know that in the last days, ver. 1. i. e. in gospel-times there would come perilous times. Though gospel-times were times of reformation in many respects, let him know that even in gospel-times there would be perilous times; not so much on the account of persecution from without, as on the account of corruptions within. There would be difficult times, wherein it would be difficult for a man to keep a good conscience. He doth not say perilous times shall come, for both Jews and Gentiles shall be combined to root out Christianity; but perilous times shall come for such who have the form of godliness, ver. 5. shall be corrupt and wicked, and do a great deal of damage to the church. Two traitors within the garrison, may do more hurt to it than two thousand besiegers without. Perilous times shall come, for men shall be wicked. Note, Sin makes the times perilous. When there is a general corruption of manners, and of the tempers of men, that makes the times dangerous to live in, for it is hard to keep our integrity in the midst of general corruption.

2. The coming of perilous times is an evidence of the truth of scripture predictions; if the event in this respect did not answer the prophecy, we might be tempted to question the divinity of the Bible. We are all concerned to know this, to believe and consider it, that we may not be surprised when we see the times perilous, *this know also.*

Then he tells Timothy what would be the occasion of making these times perilous, or what shall be the marks and signs, whereby these times may be known, ver. 2. and the following verses.

1. Self-love will make the times perilous. Who is there that doth not love himself; but this is meant of an irregular sinful self-love. Men love their carnal selves, better than their spiritual selves. Men love to gratify their own lusts, and make provision for them, more than to please God and do their duty. Instead of Christian charity that takes care for the good of others, they will mind themselves only, and prefer their own gratification before the church's edification.

2. Covetousness. Observe, Self-love brings in a long train of sins and mischiefs. When men are lovers of themselves, no good can be expected from them, as all good may be expected from those that love God with all their hearts. When covetousness generally prevails, and every man is for what he can get, and keeping what he hath, this makes men dangerous to one another, and obliges every man to stand on his guard against his neighbour.

3. Pride and vain glory make the times perilous. When men, being proud of themselves, are boasters and blasphemers, boasters before men whom they despise and look upon with scorn, and blasphemers of God and of his name; when men do not fear God, they will not regard man, and so vice versa.

4. When children are disobedient to their parents, and break through the obligations which they lie under to them both in duty and gratitude, and frequently in interest, having their dependence upon them, and their expectation from them, that makes the times perilous; for what wickedness will they stick at, that will be abusive to their own parents, and rebel against them.

5. Unthankfulness and unholiness make the times perilous, and those two commonly go together. What is the reason that men are unholily and without the fear of God, but that they are unthankful for the mercies of God? Ingratitude and impiety go together, for call a man ungrateful, and you can call him by no worse name. Unthankful and impure, defiled with fleshly lusts, which is an instance of great ingratitude to that God who hath provided so well for the support of the body, but we abuse his gifts, if we make them the food and fuel of our lusts.

6. The times are perilous when men will not be held by the bonds either of nature or common honesty; when they are without natural affection, and truce-breakers, ver. 3. There is a natural affection due to all. Wherever there is the human nature, there should be humanity towards those of the same nature, but especially between relations. Times are perilous when children are disobedient to their parents, ver. 2. and when parents are without natural affection to their children, ver. 3. See what a corruption of nature sin is, how it deprives men even of that which nature hath implanted in them for the support of their own kind; for the natural affection of parents to their children, is that which contributes very much to the keeping up of mankind upon the earth. And those that will not be bound by natural affection, no marvel they will not be bound by the most solemn leagues and covenants. They are truce-breakers, that make no conscience of the engagements they have laid themselves under. Again, the times are perilous when men are false accusers one of another; *deceivers*, devils one to another; no regard had to the good name of others, nor to the religious obligations of oath, but think themselves at liberty to say and do what they please, *Psal. xii. 4.*

7. When men have no government of themselves and their own appetites. Not of their own appetites, for they are incontinent. Not of their own passions, for they are fierce: Have no rule over their own spirits, and therefore are like a city that is broken down and hath no walls: they are soon fired upon the least provocation.

8. When that which is good and ought to be honoured, is generally despised and looked upon with contempt. It is the pride of persecutors that they look with contempt upon good people, though they are more excellent than their neighbours.

9. When men are generally treacherous, wilful and haughty, the times are perilous, ver. 4. when men are traitors, heady, high-minded. Our Saviour hath foretold, that the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son, *Matt. x. 21.* And those are the worst sort of traitors, those that delivered up their Bibles to persecutors, were called *traditores*, for they betrayed the trust committed to them. When men are petulant and puffed up, carrying it scornfully to all about them, and when this temper generally prevails, then the times are perilous.

10. When men are generally lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. When there are more epicures than true Christians, then the times are bad indeed. God is to be loved above all; that is a carnal mind, and is full of enmity against him, which prefers any thing before him, especially such a sordid thing as carnal pleasure is.

11. All this notwithstanding, all these have the form of godliness, ver. 5. i. e. are called by the Christian name, baptized into the Christian faith, make a shew of religion; but how plausible soever their form of godliness is, they deny the power of it. When they take upon them the form, which should and would bring along with it the power thereof, they will put asunder what God hath joined together: They will assume the form of godliness to take away their reproach, but they will not submit to the power of it to take away their sin.

Observe here, 1. Men may be very bad and wicked under a profession of religion; they may be lovers of themselves, &c. yet have a form of godliness. 2. A form of godliness is a very different thing from the power of it, men may have the one, and be wholly destitute of the other: yea, they deny it, at least practically in their lives. 3. From such good Christians must withdraw themselves.

6. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. 7. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the faith: men of corrupt minds reprobate concerning the truth. 9. But they shall proceed no further; for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Here Paul warns Timothy to take heed of certain seducers, not only that he might not be drawn away by them himself, but that he might arm those that were under his charge against their seduction.

1. He shews how industrious they were to make proselytes, ver. 6. they applied themselves to particular persons, visited them in their houses, not daring to appear openly, for they that do evil hate the light, *John iii. 20.* they were not forced into houses, as good Christians often were by persecution; but they of choice crept into houses to insinuate themselves into the affections and good opinion of people, and so to draw them over to their party. And see what sort of people they were that they gained and made proselytes of; they were such as were weak, silly women; and such as were wicked, laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts; a foolish head and a filthy heart make persons, especially women, an easy prey to seducers.

2. He shews how far they were from coming to the knowledge of the truth, though they pretend to be ever learning, ver. 7. In one sense we must all be ever learning, i. e. growing in knowledge, following on to know the Lord, pressing forwards, but these were sceptics, giddy and unstable, that were forward to imbibe every new notion, under pretence of advancement in

in knowledge, but never come to a right understanding in the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. He foretells the certain stop that should be put to their progress, *ver. 8, 9.* comparing them to the Egyptian magicians that withstood Moses, they are here named Janues and Jambres, though the names are not to be met with in the story of the Old Testament, yet they are found in some old Jewish writers. Moses came with a divine commission to fetch Israel out of Egypt, these magicians opposed him, and thus those heretics *resisted the truth*, and like them were of *corrupt minds*. Men that had their understandings perverted, biased, and prejudiced against the truth, and *reprobate concerning the faith*; i. e. very far from being true Christians; but they shall proceed no further, or not much further, as some read it.

Observe, 1. Seducers seek for corners and love obscurity; for they are afraid to appear in public, and therefore creep into houses. Further, They attack those who are the least able to defend themselves; that is silly and wicked women. 2. Seducers in all ages are much alike, their characters are the same, *men of corrupt minds*, &c. and their conduct much the same, they resist the truth, as Janues and Jambres withstood Moses, and they will be alike in their disappointment.

3. Those that resist the truth are guilty of folly, yea, of egregious folly, for *magna est veritas & prevalet*.

4. Though the spirit of error may be let loose for a time, God hath it in a chain. Satan can deceive the nations and the churches no farther nor no longer than God will permit him; *their folly shall be manifest*; i. e. it shall appear that they are impostors, and every man shall abandon them.

10. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience. 11. Persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra: what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. 13. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Here the apostle to confirm Timothy in that wherein he walketh,

(1.) Sets before him his own example, which Timothy had been an eyewitness of, having long attended Paul, *ver. 10. thou hast fully known my doctrine.* The more fully we know the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, the more closely we shall cleave to it, and the reason why many sit loose to it is, because they do not fully know it. Christ's apostles had no enemies but those that did not know them, or not know them fully; those that knew them best loved and honoured them the most. Now what is it that Timothy had so fully known in Paul?

1. The doctrine that he preached. Paul kept back nothing from his hearers, but declared to them the whole counsel of God, *Acts xx. 27.* so that if it were not their own fault, they might fully know it. Timothy had a great advantage in being trained up under such a tutor, and being apprised of the doctrine he preached.

2. He had fully known his *conversation*; thou hast known my doctrine, and manner of life; and his manner of life was of a piece with his doctrine, and did not contradict it. He did not pull down by his living what he built up by his preaching. Those ministers are likely to do good, and leave lasting fruits of their labours, whose manner of life agrees with their doctrine; as on the contrary those cannot expect to profit the people at all, who preach well and live well.

3. Timothy fully knew what was the great thing that Paul drove at, both in his preaching and in his conversation. Thou hast known *my purpose*; i. e. what I drive at, how far it is from my worldly, carnal, secular design, and how sincerely I aim at the glory of God and the good of the souls of men.

4. Timothy fully knew Paul's good character which he might gather from his doctrine, manner of life and purpose; for he gave proofs of his faith: i. e. of his integrity and fidelity, or his faith in Christ, his faith concerning another world, by which Paul lived, his long-suffering towards the churches to which he preached and over which he presided, his charity towards all men, and his patience. These were graces that Paul was eminent for, and Timothy knew it.

5. He knew that he had suffered ill for doing well, *ver. 11.* Thou hast fully known the *persecutions and afflictions that came unto me.* He instances in those only which happened to him while Timothy was with him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; and therefore let it be no surprise to thee if thou suffer hard things, it is no more than I have endured before.

6. He knew what care God had taken of him, notwithstanding, out of them all the Lord delivered me: as he never failed his cause, so his God never failed him. Thou hast fully known my *afflictions*. When we know the afflictions of good people but in part, they are a temptation to us to decline that cause which they suffer for, when we only know the hardships they undergo for Christ, we may be ready to say, we will bless us from that cause that is like to cost us so dear in the owning of it; but when we fully know the afflictions, not only how they suffer, but how they are supported and comforted under their sufferings; then, instead of being discouraged, we shall be encouraged by them, especially considering that we are told before that we must count upon such things, *ver. 12. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Not always alike; at that time they that professed the faith of Christ were most exposed to persecutions than at other times; but at all times, more or less, they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. They must expect to be despised, and that their religion will stand in the way of their preferment; they that will live godly must expect it, especially they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, i. e. according to the strict rules of the Christian religion, will wear the livery and bear the name of the crucified Redeemer; all that will shew their religion in their conversation, that will not only be godly but live godly, let them expect persecution, especially when they are resolute in it.

1. The apostle's life was very exemplary for three things, for his doctrine, which was according to the will of God: for his life, which was agreeable to his doctrine, and for his persecutions and sufferings. 2. Though his life was a life of great usefulness, yet it was a life of great sufferings: and none, I believe, came nearer to their great Master for eminent service and great sufferings than St. Paul; he suffered almost in every place; the Holy Ghost witnessed that bonds and afflictions did abide him, *Acts xx. 23.* Here he mentions his persecutions and afflictions at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, besides what he suffered elsewhere. 3. The apostle mentions the Lord's delivering him out of all, for Timothy's and our encouragement under sufferings. 4. We have the practice and treatment of true Christians, they live godly in Jesus Christ, that is their practice; and they shall suffer persecution, that is the usage they must expect in this world.

(2.) He warns Timothy of the fatal end of seducers, as a reason why he

should stick close to the truth, as it is in Jesus, *ver. 13. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, &c.* Observe, that as good men by the grace of God grow better and better, so bad men through the subtilty of Satan and the power of their own corruptions grow worse and worse. The way of sin is down-hill, for such proceed from bad to worse, *deceiving and being deceived.* Those that deceive others do but deceive themselves, that draw others into error, run themselves into more and more mistakes, and they will find it so at last to their cost.

14. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them: 15. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

He directs him to keep close to a good education, and particularly to what he had learned out of the holy scriptures, *ver. 14, 15. Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.* Note, It is not enough to learn that which is good, but we must continue in it, and persevere in it unto the end. Then we are Christ's disciples indeed, *John viii. 33.*

We should not be any more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, *Ephes. iv. 14.* Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, *Heb. xiii. 9.* and for this reason we should continue in the things we have learned from the holy scriptures; not that we ought to continue in any errors and mistakes which we may have been led into in the time of our childhood and youth, for these upon an impartial inquiry and full conviction we should forsake; but these make nothing against our continuing in those things the holy scriptures plainly assert, and which he that runs may read.

If Timothy would stick to the truth as he had been taught it, that would arm him against the snares and insinuations of seducers. They are the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of. It is a great happiness to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, *Luke i. 4.* Not only to know what the truths are, but to know that they are of undoubted certainty. What we have learned we must labour to be more and more assured of; that being grounded in the truth, we may be guarded against error for certainty, in religion is of great importance and advantage. *Knowing.*

1. That thou hast had good teachers, consider of whom thou hast learned them; not of evil men and seducers, but good men, that had themselves experienced the power of the truths they taught thee, and been ready to suffer for them, and thereby would give the fullest evidence of their belief of these truths. 2. Knowing especially the firm foundation upon which thou hast built, namely, that of the scripture, *ver. 15. That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures.*

Observe, Those that would acquaint themselves with the things of God, and be assured of them, must know the holy scriptures, for those are the summary of divine revelation. Observe, It is a great happiness to know the holy scriptures from our childhood; and children should betimes get the knowledge of the scriptures. The age of children is the learning age, and those that would get true learning, must get it out of the scriptures.

Observe further, The scriptures we are to know are the holy scriptures, they came from the holy God, and were delivered by holy men, and contain holy precepts, and treat of holy things, and were designed to make us holy, and to lead us in the way of holiness to happiness; being called the holy scriptures, they are by that distinguished from profane writings of all sorts, and from those that only treat of morality, and common justice and honesty, but do not meddle with holiness. If we would know the holy scriptures, we must read and search them daily as the noble Bereans did, *Acts xvii. 14.* They must not lie by us neglected, or seldom or never looked into.

Now here observe, 1. What is the excellency of the scripture. It is *given by inspiration of God*, *ver. 16.* and therefore is his word. It is a divine revelation which we may depend upon as infallibly true. The same spirit that breathed reason into us, breathes revelation among us.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men spoke as they were moved or carried forth by the Holy Ghost, *2 Pet. i. 21.* The prophets and apostles did not speak for themselves, but what they received of the Lord that they delivered unto us. That the scripture was given by inspiration of God, appears by the majesty of its style, and the truth, purity and sublimity of the doctrines contained in it, from the harmony of its several parts, from its power and efficacy on the minds of multitudes that converse with it, from the accomplishment of many prophecies relating to things beyond all human foresight, and from the uncontrollable miracles that were wrought in proof of its divine original; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will, *Heb. ii. 4.*

2. What use it will be of to us,

1. It is able to make us wise to salvation; that is, it is a sure guide in our way to eternal life. Note, Those are wise indeed that are wise to salvation. The scriptures are able to make us truly wise, wise for our souls and another world; to make thee wise to salvation through faith. Observe, The scriptures will make us wise to salvation, if they be mixed with faith, and not otherwise, *Heb. iv. 2.* For if we do not believe their truth and goodness, they will do us no good.

2. It is profitable to us for all the purposes of the Christian life, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. It answers all the ends of divine revelation. It instructs us in that which is true, reproofs us from that which is amiss, directs us in that which is good. It is of use to all, for we all need to be instructed, corrected, and reproofed: It is of special use to ministers, that are to give instruction, correction, and reproof, and whence can they fetch it better than from the scripture?

Ver. 17. That the man of God may be perfect. The Christian, the minister, is the man of God. That which finishes a man of God in this world, is the scripture. By it we are thoroughly furnished for every good work. There is that in the scripture which suits every case. Whatever duty we have to do, whatever service is required from us, we may find enough in the scriptures to furnish us for it.

1. We see the scripture hath various uses, and answers divers ends and purposes; it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction of all errors in judgment and practice, and for instruction in righteousness. 2. The scripture is a perfect rule of faith and practice, and was designed for the

the man of God, the minister as well as the Christian who is devoted to God, for it is profitable for doctrine, &c. 3. If we consult the scripture that was given by inspiration of God, and follow its directions we shall be made men of God, perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good work. 4. We further learn, there is no occasion for the writings of the philosophers, nor for rabbinical fables, nor popish legends, nor unwritten traditions, to make us perfect men of God, since the scripture answers all these ends and purposes. O! that we may love our Bible more, and keep closer to them than ever, and then shall we find the benefit and advantage designed thereby, and shall at last attain the happiness therein promised and assured to us.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter St. Paul doth with great solemnity and earnestness press Timothy to the diligent and conscientious discharge of his work and office, as an evangelist: and the charge given to him, all gospel-ministers are to take to themselves, ver. 1—6. 2. The reason of his concern in this case, Why must Timothy now be instant in season, &c. in a particular manner? Because the church was likely to be deprived of the apostle's labours, for his departure was at hand, ver. 6, 7, 8. 3. Divers particular matters, with an hint and caution about Alexander the copper-smith, ver. 9—16. 4. He informeth him of what befel him at his first answer, though men forsake him the Lord stood by him, and that encouraged him to hope for future deliverance, ver. 16—19. And then he concludes with salutations and a benediction, ver. 19. to the end.

I Charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: 2. Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. 3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. 4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. 6. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. 8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

(1.) Observe how awfully this charge is introduced, ver. 1. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.* Observe, The best of men have need to be awed into the discharge of their duty. The work of a minister is not an indifferent thing, but absolutely necessary. Woe be to him if he preach not the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16. *I charge thee.* To induce him to faithfulness, he must consider,

1. That the eye of God and Jesus Christ was upon him. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,* i. e. as thou tenderest the favour of God and Jesus Christ; as thou wilt approve thyself to God and Jesus Christ, by the obligations both of natural and revealed religion; as thou wilt make due returns to the God that made thee, and the Lord Jesus Christ that redeemed thee.

2. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day: minding him of the judgment to come, which is committed to the Lord Jesus. He shall judge the quick and the dead, *at his appearing and his kingdom,* i. e. when he appears in his kingdom. It concerns all, both ministers and people, seriously to consider the account that they must shortly give to Jesus Christ, of all the trusts reposed in them. Christ shall judge the quick and the dead, i. e. those that at the last day shall be found alive, and those that shall be raised to life out of the grave.

Note 1. The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and dead: God hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and hath appointed him the judge of quick and dead, Acts x. 42. 2. He will appear; he will come the second time, and it will be a glorious appearance, as the word *ἐπιφάνεια* signifies. 3. Then his kingdom shall appear in his glory, *at his appearing and kingdom,* for he will then appear in his kingdom, sitting on a throne to judge the world.

(2.) What is the matter of the charge? ver. 2—5. He is charged,

1. To preach the word. That is ministers' business; a dispensation is committed to them. It is not their own notions and fancies that they are to preach, but the pure plain word of God, and they must not corrupt it, but as of sincerity, but as of God; in the sight of God they speak in Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 17.

2. To urge what he preached, and to press it with all earnestness upon his hearers: *Be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort:* i. e. do this work with all fervency of spirit. Call upon those under thy charge to take heed of sin, to do their duty: Call upon them to repent and believe, and live a holy life, and this *both in season and out of season.* In season: i. e. when they are at leisure to hear thee: when some special opportunity offers itself of speaking to them with advantage. Nay, do it out of season, even when there is not that apparent probability of fastening something upon them, because thou dost not know but the Spirit of God may fasten upon them, for the wind bloweth where it listeth: and *in the morning we must sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand,* Eccles. xi. 6.

We must do it *in season:* i. e. let slip no opportunity; and do it *out of season:* i. e. we must not shift off the duty under pretence that it is out of season.

3. He must tell people of their faults; *reprove them, rebuke them:* Convince wicked people of the evil and danger of their wicked courses. Endeavour, by dealing plainly with them, to bring them to repentance. Rebuke them with gravity and authority in Christ's name, that they may take thy displeasure against them as an indication of God's displeasure.

4. He must direct, encourage, and quicken, those that began well. *Exhort them;* persuade them to hold on, and endure to the end, and this *with all long suffering and doctrine.*

1. He must do it very patiently, *with all long suffering.* If thou do not see the effect of thy labours presently, yet do not therefore give up the cause;

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be not weary of speaking to them: while God shews to them all long-suffering, let ministers exhort with all long-suffering.

2. He must do it rationally, not with passion, but *with doctrine;* i. e. in order to the reducing of them to good practices, instil into them good principles. Teach them the truth as it is in Jesus, and reduce them to a firm belief of that, and that will be a means both to reclaim them from evil and to bring them to good.

Observe, 1. A minister's work hath various parts; he is to preach the word, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort. 2. He is to be very diligent and careful; he must be instant in season and out of season; he must spare no pains nor labour, but must be urgent with them to take care of their souls and their eternal concerns.

5. He must watch in all things; i. e. seek an opportunity of doing them a kindness; let no fair occasion slip through thy negligence. Watch to thy work; watch against the temptations of Satan, by which thou mayest be diverted from them; watch over the souls of those that are committed to thy charge.

6. He must count upon afflictions, and endure them; make the best of them. *Καταπάσχω,* endure patiently, be not discouraged by the difficulties thou meetest with, but bear them with an evenness of spirit. Inure thyself to hardships.

7. He must remember his office, and discharge that. *Do the work of an evangelist.* The office of the evangelists was, as the apostles deputies, to water the churches that they planted. They were not settled pastors, but for some time resided in, and presided over the churches that the apostles had planted, till they were settled under a standing ministry. This was Timothy's work.

8. He must fulfil his ministry; make full proof of it. It was a great trust that was reposed in him, and therefore he must answer it, and perform all the parts of his office with diligence and care.

Observe, 1. A minister must expect afflictions in the faithful discharge of his duty. 2. He must endure them; i. e. bear them patiently like a Christian hero. 3. These must not discourage him in his work, for he must do his work, and fulfil his ministry. 4. The best way to make full proof of our ministry, is to fulfil it, to fill it up in all its parts with proper work.

(2.) The reasons to enforce the charge.

1. Because errors and heresies were likely to creep into the church, by which the minds of many professing Christians would be corrupted, ver. 3.

4. *For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine:* Therefore improve the present time, when they will endure it; be busy now, for it is seed-time, when the fields are white unto the harvest put in the sickle, for the present gale of opportunity will soon be over. *They will not endure sound doctrine.* There will be those that will heap to themselves corrupt teachers, and will turn away their ears from the truth; and therefore secure as many as thou canst; that when these storms and tempests do arise they may be well fixed, and their apostasy may be prevented. People must hear, and ministers must preach for the time to come, and guard against the mischief that are likely to arise hereafter, though they do not yet arise. They will turn away their ears from the truth; i. e. they will grow sick of the old plain gospel of Christ, and then they will be greedy of fables, and take pleasure in them, and God shall give them up to strong delusions, because they received not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

Observe, 1. These teachers were of their own heaping up, and not of God's sending, but they chose them to gratify their lusts, and to please their itching ears. 2. People do so when they will not endure sound doctrine, that preaching which is searching, plain, and to the purpose, then they will have teachers of their own. 3. There is a wide difference between the word of God and the words of such teachers; the one is sound doctrine, the word of truth, the other is only fables. 4. They that are turned unto fables, first turn away their ears from the truth, for they cannot hear and mind both, no more than they can serve two masters: Nay, further, it is said, they shall be turned into fables. God justly suffers them to turn to fables, who grow weary of the truth, and gives them up to be led aside from the truth by fables.

2. Because Paul for his part had almost done his work. *Do thou make full proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered,* ver. 6. And, 1. Therefore there will be the more occasion for thee. When labourers are removed out of the vineyard, it is no time for them to loiter that are left behind, but to double their diligence. The fewer hands there are to work, the more industrious those hands must be that are at work.

2. I have done the work of my day and generation, do thou in like manner do the work of thy day and generation.

3. The comfort and cheerfulness of Paul in the prospect of his approaching departure, might encourage Timothy to the utmost industry and diligence and seriousness in his work. Paul was an old soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy was but newly listed. Come, saith Paul, I have found our master kind, the cause good, and I can look back upon my warfare with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, and therefore be not afraid of the difficulties thou must meet with. The crown of life is as sure to thee, as if it were already upon thy head, and therefore endure afflictions, and make full proof of thy ministry. The courage and comfort of dying saints and ministers, and especially dying martyrs, is a great confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion, and a great encouragement to living saints and ministers and their work. Here,

1. He looks forward upon his death approaching. *I am now ready to be offered.* The Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, that bonds and afflictions did abide him, Acts xx. 23. He was now at Rome, and it is probable he had particular intimations from the Spirit, that there he should seal the truth with his blood; and he looks upon it now as near at hand. *I am already poured out;* so it is in the original, *ἡδη σκεδασμαι,* i. e. I am already a martyr in affection. It alludes to the pouring out of the drink-offerings; for the blood of the martyrs, though it was not a sacrifice of atonement, yet it was a sacrifice of acknowledgment to the honour of the grace of God and his truths. Observe, With what pleasure he speaks of dying. He calls it his *departure;* though it is probable he foresaw he must die a violent bloody death, yet he calls it his departure, or his release. Death to a good man is his release from the imprisonment of this world, and his departure to the enjoyments of another world; he doth not cease to be, but is only removed from one world to another.

2. Observe with what pleasure he looks back upon the life he had lived, ver. 7. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,* &c. He therefore did not fear death, because he had the testimony of his conscience, that by the grace of God he had in some measure answered the ends of living. As a Christian, as a minister, he had fought the good fight. He had done the service, gone through the difficulties of his warfare, and had been instrumental in carrying on the glorious victories of the exalted Redeemer over the powers of darkness. His life was a course, and he had now finished it; as his warfare was accomplished, so his race was run. *I have kept the faith.* I have kept the doctrines of the gospel, and never betrayed any of them.

Note, 1. The life of a Christian, but especially of a minister, is a warfare

fare and a race, sometimes compared to the one in the scripture, and sometimes to the other. 2. It is a good fight, a good warfare, the cause is good, and the victory is sure, if we continue faithful and courageous. 3. We must fight this good fight, we must fight it out and finish our course; we must not give over till we are made more than conquerors through him that hath loved us, *Rom. viii. 37.* 4. It is a great comfort to a dying saint, when he can look back upon his past life, and say with our apostle, *I have fought, &c.* I have kept the faith, the doctrine of faith, and the grace of faith: towards the end of our days to be able to speak in this manner, what comfort, unspeakable comfort, will it afford? Let it be then our constant endeavour, by the grace of God, that we may finish our course with joy, *Acts xx. 24.*

3. With what pleasure he looks forward to the life he was to live hereafter, ver. 8. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* He had lost for Christ, but he was sure he should not lose by him, *Phil. iii. 8.* Let this encourage Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ: that there is a crown of life before us, the glory and joy of which will abundantly recompense all the hardships and toils of our present warfare. Observe, It is called a *crown of righteousness*; because it will be the recompence of our services, which *God is not unrighteous to forget.* And because our holiness and righteousness will there be perfected, and that will be our crown.

God will give it as a *righteous judge*, who will let none lose by him.

And yet this crown of righteousness was not peculiar to Paul, as if it belonged only to apostles, and eminent ministers and martyrs, but to all them *also that love his appearing.* Observe, It is the character of all the saints, that they love the appearing of Jesus Christ: They loved his first appearing, when he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, *Heb. ix. 26.* They love to think of it; they love his second appearing at the Great Day: love it and long for it: And those that love the appearing of Jesus Christ, he shall appear to their joy: there is a crown of righteousness reserved for them, which shall then be given them, *Heb. ix. 26.*

We learn hence, 1. The Lord is the righteous judge, for his judgment is according to truth. 2. Believers crown is a crown of righteousness, purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and bestowed as the reward of the saints righteousness. 3. This crown, which believers shall wear, is laid up for them; they have it not at present, for here they are but heirs; they have it not in possession, and yet it is sure, for it is laid up for them. 4. The righteous judge will give it to all that love, prepare and long for his appearing: *Surely I come quickly, Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus.*

9. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. 10. For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica: Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee. For he is profitable to me for the ministry. 12. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. 13. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. 14. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works. 15. Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our works.

Here are divers particular matters which Paul mentions to Timothy now at the closing of the epistle.

1. He bids him hasten to him, if possible, ver. 9. *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:* For Timothy was an evangelist that was not fixed pastor of any one place, but attended the motions of the apostles, to build upon their foundation. Paul wanted Timothy's company and help; and the reason he gives is, because several had left him, ver. 10. One from an ill principle, that was Demas, who abides under an ill name for it. *Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.* He quitted Paul and his interest, either for fear of suffering, because Paul was now a prisoner, and he was afraid of coming into trouble upon his account, or being called off from his ministry by secular affairs, which he entangled himself in, his first love to Christ and his gospel was forsaken and forgotten, and he fell in love with the world. Note, Love to this present world is oftentimes the cause of apostasy from the truths and ways of Jesus Christ. He is gone off, *is departed to Thessalonica*: called thither perhaps by trade, or by some other worldly business. Crescens is gone one way and Titus another way, and only Luke was with Paul, ver. 11, 12. Was not that enough? Paul did not think it so, he loved the company of his friends.

2. He speaks respectfully concerning Mark. He is *profitable to me for the ministry.* It is supposed this Mark was he about whom Paul and Barnabas fell out, *Acts xv. 39.* Paul would not take him with him to the work, because he had once flinched and drawn back: But now, faith he, take Mark and bring him with thee. By this it appears that Paul was now reconciled to Mark, and had now a better opinion of him than he had formerly. This teaches us to be of a forgiving spirit; and those that are profitable and useful, though they may have done amiss, yet we must not therefore disdain for ever making use of them.

3. Paul orders Timothy to come to him, bids him as he came through Troas to bring with him from thence those things which he had left behind him there, ver. 13. his cloak he had left there, which it may be Paul had the more occasion for in a cold prison. It is probable it was the habit that Paul usually wore, a plain dress. Some read it, *the roll of parchment I left at Troas*; others the *desk* that I left. Paul was guided by divine inspiration, and yet he would have his books with him: Whereas he had exhorted Timothy to give attendance to reading, so he did himself, though he was now ready to be offered. As long as we live we must be still learning. But especially the *parchments*, which some think were originals of his epistles: others think were the skins of which he made his tents, whereby he got a livelihood, working with his own hands.

4. He mentions Alexander, and the mischief that he had done him, ver. 14, 15. This is he that is spoke of *Acts xix. 33.* It should seem he had been a professor of the Christian religion, a forward professor, for he was there particularly maligned by the worshippers of Diana, and yet he did Paul much evil. Paul was in as much danger from false brethren, *2 Cor. xi. 26.* as from open enemies. Paul foretels that God would reckon with him. It is a prophetic denunciation of the just judgment of God that would befall him. The Lord will reward him according to his works. He cautions Timothy to take heed of him, *of whom be thou ware also*, that he do not, under pretence of friendship, betray thee to mischief. It is dangerous having any thing to do with those that would be enemies to such a man as Paul.

Observe, 1. Some that were once Paul's hearers and admirers, did not give him reason to remember them with much pleasure, for one forsook him, and another did him much evil, and greatly withstood his words

Yet, 2. At the same time he mentions some with pleasure, the badness of some did not make him forget the goodness of others; such as Timothy, Titus, Mark, and Luke. 3. The apostle hath left a brand on the names and memory of two persons, the one is Demas, who forsook him, having loved the present world, and the other is Alexander, who greatly withstood his words. 4. God will reward evil doers, particularly apostates, according to their works. Lastly, of such that are of Alexander's spirit and temper we should beware, for they will do us no good, but all the mischief that is in their power.

16. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. 17. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 19. Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20. Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. 21. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. 22. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Here he gives Timothy an account of his own present circumstances. He had lately been called to appear before the emperor, upon his appeal to Caesar, and then *no man stood with him*, ver. 16. to plead his cause, to bear testimony for him, or so much as to keep him in countenance, but *all men forsook him.* This was strange, that so good a man as Paul should have nobody to own him, even at Rome, where there were many Christians, whose faith was spoken of throughout all the world, *Rom. i. 8.* But men are but men. The Christians at Rome were forward to go and meet him, *Acts xxvii.* but when it came to the pinch that they would be in danger of suffering with him, then they all forsook him. He prays that *God would not lay it to their charge*; intimating that it was a great fault, and God might justly be angry with them, but he prays God to forgive them. See what distinction is put between sins of presumption and sins of infirmity: Alexander the coppersmith, that maliciously withstood Paul, he prays against him, *The Lord reward him according to his works*; but these Christians, through weakness, shrunk back from Paul in time of trial. *The Lord lay it not to their charge.*

Here we see, 1. St. Paul had his trial in his friends forsaking him in a time of danger, as well as in the opposition made by enemies; all forsook him. 2. It was their sin not to appear for the good apostle, especially at its first answer; but it was a sin of weakness, and therefore the more excusable. Yet, 3. God might lay it to their charge, but St. Paul endeavours to prevent it by his earnest prayers, *Let it not be laid to their charge.*

Notwithstanding this, *God stood by him*, ver. 17. i. e. gave him extraordinary wisdom and courage, to enable him to speak so much the better himself. When he had no body to keep him in countenance, God made his face to shine: *that by me the preaching might be fully known*; that is, God brought me out from that difficulty, that I might preach the gospel, which is my business. Nay it should seem, that he might preach the gospel at that time: for Paul knew how to preach at the bar, as well as in the pulpit: *and that all the Gentiles might hear*; the emperor himself and the great men, that would never have heard Paul preach, if he had not been brought before them. *And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*: i. e. of Nero, as some think, or some other judge. Some understand it only as a proverbial form of speech, to signify that he was in imminent danger. *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work.* See how Paul improves his experiences; he that hath delivered, doth deliver, and we trust he shall yet deliver; shall deliver me from every evil work; i. e. from doing any ill myself, and having any ill done to me by others. *And shall preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.* And for this he gives glory to God, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

1. If the Lord stands by us he will strengthen us in the time of difficulty and danger, and his presence will more than supply every one's absence. 2. When the Lord preserves his servants from great and imminent danger, it is for eminent work and service. Paul was preserved, that by him the preaching might be fully known, &c. 3. Former deliverances should encourage future hopes. 4. There is an heavenly kingdom, to which the Lord will preserve his faithful, witnessing or suffering servants. Lastly, We ought to give God the glory of all past, present, and future deliverances. *To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

He sends salutations to Aquila, and Priscilla, and the household of Onesiphorus, ver. 19. He mentions his leaving Trophimus sick at Miletum, ver. 20. by which it appears that though the apostles healed all manner of diseases miraculously, for the confirmation of their doctrine, yet they did not exert that power upon their own friends, lest it should have looked like a collusion.

He hastens Timothy to come to him before winter, ver. 21. because he longed to see him, and because in the winter the journey or voyage would be more dangerous.

He sends commendations to him from Eubulus and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. One of the heathen writers at this time mentions one Pudens and his wife Claudia, and saith, that Claudia was a Briton; whence some have gathered, that it was this Pudens, and that Claudia here was his wife, and that they were eminent Christians at Rome.

He concludes with a prayer, that the Lord Jesus would be with his Spirit. We need no more to make us happy than to have the Lord Jesus Christ with our spirits; for in him all spiritual blessings are summed up. And it is the best prayer we can put up for our friends, that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirits, to sanctify and save them, and at last receive them to himself; as Stephen the proto martyr prayed, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*, *Acts vii. 59. q. d.* Lord Jesus receive that spirit thou hast been with whilst it was united to the body, do not now leave it in its separate state.

Grace be with you. Amen. This was our apostle's token in every epistle, so he wrote, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.* Amen. *2 Thess. iii. 17, 18.* And if grace be with us here to convert and change us, to make us holy, and to keep us humble, and enable us to persevere to the end, glory will crown us hereafter; for the Lord is a sun and a shield, the Lord will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee, *Psal. lxxiv. 11, 12.*

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God our Saviour, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
 WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
 OF THE EPISTLE OF
St. PAUL to TITUS.

THIS Epistle of Paul to Titus is much of the same nature with those to Timothy; both were converts of Paul and his companions in labours and sufferings, both in the office of evangelists, whose work was to water the churches planted by the apostles, and to set in order the things that were wanting in them: They were vice-apostles as it were *working the work of the Lord as they did*, and mostly under their direction, though not despotic and arbitrary, but with the concurring exercise of their own prudence and judgment, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 12. We read much of this Titus, his titles and character, and active usefulness in many places: He was a Greek, Gal. ii. 3. St. Paul called him *his son*, Tit. i. 4. *his brother*, 2 Cor. ii. 13. *his partner and fellow helper*, 2 Cor. viii. 23. *one that walked in the same Spirit, and in the same steps with himself*. He went up with the apostles to the church at Jerusalem, Gal. ii. 1. was much conversant at Corinth, for which church he had an earnest care, 2 Cor. viii. 16. Paul's second epistle to them, and probably his first also, was sent by his hand, 2 Cor. viii. 16, 17, 18, 23. and chap. ix. 2, 3, 4. and chap. xii. 18. He was with the apostle at Rome, and thence went into Dalmatia, 2 Tim. iv. 10 after which no more occurs of him in the scriptures. So that by them he appears not to have been a fixed bishop; if such he were, and in those times, the church of Corinth, where he most attended, had the best title to him. In Crete, (now called Candia, formerly Hecatompolis, from the hundred cities that were in it) a large island at the mouth of the Ægean sea, the gospel had got some footing; and here were Paul and Titus in one of their travels cultivating this plantation; but *the apostle of the Gentiles*, having on him *the care of all the churches*, could not himself tarry long at this place; therefore left Titus some time there to carry on the work which had been begun; wherein, probably meeting with more difficulty than ordinary, Paul wrote this epistle to him, and yet perhaps not so much for his own sake, as for the peoples, that the endeavours of Titus, strengthened with apostolic advice and authority, might be more significant and effectual among them. He was to see all the cities furnished with good pastors: to reject and keep out the unmeet and unworthy; to teach sound doctrine, and instruct all sorts in their duties; to set forth the free grace of God in man's salvation by Christ, and withal to shew the necessity of maintaining good works by those who have believed in God, and hope for eternal life from him.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have the preface or introduction to the epistle, shewing from whom and to whom it was written, with the apostle's salutation and prayer for Titus, wishing all blessings to him, ver. 1—4. Entrance into the matter, by signifying the end of Titus's being left at Crete, ver. 5. And how the same should be pursued in reference both to good and bad ministers from ver. 6, to the end.

1. **PAUL** a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness: 2 In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lye, promised before the world began; 3. But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour: 4. To Titus mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

1. Here is the preface to the epistle: Shewing,

1. The writer, Paul a Gentile name, taken by the apostle of the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 9, 46, 47. Ministers will accommodate even smaller matters, so as they may be any furthering of acceptance in their work. When the Jews rejected the gospel, and the Gentiles received it, we read no more of this apostle by his Jewish name Saul, but by his Roman one Paul.

A servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Here he is described by his relation and office. A servant of God, not in the general sense only, as a man and a Christian; but especially as a minister, serving God in the gospel of his Son, Rom. i. 9. This is an high honour; it is the glory of angels that they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation, Heb. i. 14. Yea, more especially a chief minister, an apostle of Jesus Christ; one who had seen the Lord; and was immediately called and commissioned by him, and had his doctrines from him. Observe, The highest officers in the church are but servants: There is much divinity and devotion in the inscriptions of the epistles. The apostles of Jesus Christ, who were employed to spread and propagate his religion, were therein also the servants of God; they did not set up any thing inconsistent with the truths and duties of natural religion. Christianity, which they preached, was in order to clear and enforce those natural principles, as well as to advance them, and to superadd what was fit and necessary in man's degenerate and revolted state: Therefore the apostles of Jesus Christ were the servants of God, according to the faith of God's elect. Their doctrine agreed with the faith of all the elect from the beginning of the world, and was for propagating and promoting of the same. Observe, There are elect of God, 1 Pet. i. 2. and in these the holy Spirit works precious divine faith, proper to those who are chosen to eternal life, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: Wherein he called you by our gospel. Faith is the first principle of sanctification. And the acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness. The gospel is truth; the great, sure, and saving truth, Col. i. 5. the word of the truth of the gospel. Divine faith rests not on fallible reasonings or probable opinions; but on the infallible word, the truth itself, which is after godliness, i. e. of a godly nature and tendency, pure, and purifying the heart of the believer. By this mark judge of doctrines of spirits, whether they be of God or not; what is impure, and prejudicial to true piety and practical religion, cannot be of divine original; all gospel truth is after godliness, teaching and nourishing reverence and fear of God, and obedience to him; it is true not only to be known, but acknowledged; it must be held forth in word and practice, Col. ii. 15, 16. With the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto

salvation, Rom. x. 10. Such as retain the truth in unrighteousness, neither know nor believe as they ought. To bring to this knowledge and faith and to the acknowledging and profession of the truth which is after godliness, is the great end of the gospel ministry, even of the highest degree and order in it; their teachings should have this chief aim, viz. to beget faith and confirm in it. Ver. 2, In (or for) hope for eternal life. This is the furthest intent of the gospel, to beget hope as well as faith; to take off the mind and heart from the world, and to raise them to heaven and the things above. The faith and godliness of Christians lead to eternal life, and give hope and well grounded expectation of it; for God that cannot lie hath promised it. It is the honour of God that he cannot lie or deceive; and the comfort of believers, whose treasure is laid up in his faithful promises.

But, Question, How is he said to promise before the world began? Answer, By promise some understand his decree, he purposed it in his eternal counsels, which was as it were his promise in embryo: or rather say some, *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων*, before ancient times, or many ages ago, referring to the promise darkly delivered, Gen. iii. 15. Here is the stability and antiquity of the promise of eternal life to the saints; God that cannot lye, hath promised before the world began, i. e. many ages since. How excellent, then, is the gospel, that was the matter of divine promise so early; and how much to be esteemed by us, and what thanks due for our privilege beyond those before us! Blessed are your eyes for they see, &c. No wonder if the contempt of it be punished severely, since he hath not only promised it of old; But, ver. 3, hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, i. e. made that his promise so darkly delivered of old, in due time, i. e. the proper season before appointed, more plain by preaching; that which some called foolishness of preaching hath been thus honoured. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, viz. by the word preached. Which is committed unto me. The ministry is a trust; none taketh this honour, but he that is thereunto appointed, and who is appointed and called must preach the word, 1 Cor. ix. 16. Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. Unpreaching ministers are none of the apostle's successors. According to the commandment of God our Saviour, preaching is a work appointed by God as a Saviour. See a proof here of Christ's deity, for by him was the gospel committed to Paul when he was converted, Acts ix. 15, 17. and chapter xxii. 10, 14, 15. and again when Christ appeared to him, ver. 17, 18, 21. He therefore is this Saviour, not but that the whole Trinity concur therein; the Father saves by the Son through the Spirit, and all concur in sending ministers. Let none rest, therefore, in men's calling without God's: he furnishes, and inclines, and authorizes, and gives opportunity for the work.

2. Here is the person written to described,

(1.) By his name, Titus, a Gentile Greek, yet called both to the faith and ministry. Observe, the grace of God is free and powerful. What worthiness or preparation was there in one of heathen stock and education?

(2.) He is described by his spiritual relation unto the apostle. Mine own (or my genuine) son, not by natural generation, but by supernatural regeneration. I have begotten you through the gospel, said he to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iv. 15. Ministers are spiritual fathers to those whom they are the means of converting, and will tenderly affect and cure for them, and must be answerably regarded by them. My own son after the common faith, i. e. That faith which is common to all the regenerate, and which thou hast in truth, and exprest to the life. This might be said to distinguish Titus from hypocrites and false teachers, and to recommend him to the regard of the Cretians, as being among them a lively image of the apostle himself in faith, and life, and heavenly doctrine. To this Titus, deservedly so dear to the apostle, is,

3. The salutation and prayer, wishing all blessings to him. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. Here are,

(1.) The blessings wished: Grace, mercy, and peace. Grace, i. e. the free favour of God and acceptance with him. Mercy, i. e. the fruits of that favour in pardon of sins, and freedom from all miseries by it, both here and hereafter. And peace, the positive effect and fruit of mercy. Peace with God through Christ who is our peace, and with the creatures, and ourselves; outward and inward peace, comprehending all good whatsoever, that makes for our happiness in time and to eternity. Observe, Grace

Grace is the fountain of all blessings: Mercy and peace, and all good, springs out of this. Get into God's favour and all must be well: For,

(2.) These are the persons from whom blessings are wished. *From God the Father*, the fountain of all good. Every blessing and comfort comes to us from God as a father, he is the father of all by creation, but of the good by adoption and regeneration. *And the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour*, viz. As the way and means of procurement and conveyance: All is from the Father by the Son, who is Lord by nature, heir of all things, and our Lord Redeemer and head, ordering and ruling his members: All are put under him; we hold of him, as *in capite*, and owe subjection and obedience to him who is also Jesus and Christ, the anointed Saviour, and especially our Saviour, who believe in him, delivering us from sin and hell, and bringing us to heaven and happiness.

Thus far is the preface to the epistle, then follows:

II. The entrance into the matter, by signifying,

I. The end of Titus's being left in Crete.

5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

Here is the end expressed,

(1.) More generally: *For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting.* This was the business of evangelists, in which office Titus was, to water where the apostles had planted, 1 Cor. vi. 3. Furthering and finishing what they had begun so much, *ἵνα ὁδοποιῇ* imports *to order after another.* Titus was to go on in settling what the apostle himself had not time for in his short stay there. 1. Observe, The apostle's great diligence in the gospel; when he had set things on foot in one place, he hastened away to another. He was debtor to the Greeks and to the barbarians, and laboured to spread the gospel as far as he could among them all. And, 2. Observe too, His faithfulness and prudence. He neglected not the places that he went from; but left some to cultivate the young plantation and carry on what was begun. And, 3. Observe, Likewise his humility; he disdained not to be helped in his work, and that by such as were not of so high a rank in the ministry, nor of so great gifts and furniture as himself; so the gospel might be furthered, and the good of souls promoted, he willingly used the hands of others in it; a fit example for exciting zeal and industry, and engaging to faithfulness and care of the flock; and, present or absent, living and dying, for ministers as much as in them lies, to provide for the spiritual edification and comfort of their people. We may here also, 4. Observe, That Titus, though inferior to an apostle, yet was above the ordinary fixed pastors or bishops, who were to tend particular churches, as their peculiar stated charge; but Titus was in a higher sphere to ordain such ordinary pastors where wanting, and settle things in their first state and form, and then to pass to other places for like service as there might be need. Titus was not only a minister of the catholic church, as all others also are, but a catholic minister. Others had power habitual, and in *actu primo* to minister any where, upon call and opportunity; but evangelists, such as Titus was, had power in *actu secundo* & *exercito*, and could exercise their ministry wherever they came, and claim maintenance of the churches; they were every where actual in their diocese or province, and had right to direct and guide, and preside among the ordinary pastors and ministers. Where an apostle could act as an apostle, an evangelist could as an evangelist; for *they worked the work of the Lord, as they did*, 1 Cor. xvi. 10. in a like unfixed and itinerant manner.

Here at Crete Titus was but occasionally and for a short time; Paul willed him to dispatch the business he was left for, and come to him at Nicopolis where he proposed to winter; after this he was sent to Corinth, was with the apostle at Rome, and was sent thence into Dalmatia, which is the last we read of him in scripture, so that from thence no fixed episcopacy in him does appear: he left Crete, and we find not in scripture that he returned thither any more.

But, *Question*, What power had either Paul or Titus here; Was not what they did an encroachment on the rights of civil rulers? *Answer*, In no sort, they came not to meddle with the civil rights of any, *Luke xii. 14. who made me a judge or a divider over you?* Their work was spiritual, to be carried on by conviction or persuasion, no way interfering with, or prejudicing, or weakening the power of magistrates, but securing and strengthening it rather; the *things wanting* were not such as civil magistrates are the fountains or authors of, but divine and spiritual ordinances, and appointments for spiritual ends, and deriving from Christ the king and head of the church: For settling these was Titus left. And Observe, No easy thing is it to raise churches and bring them to perfection: Paul had himself been here labouring and yet were there *things wanting*, materials are out of square, need much hewing and cutting to bring them into right form, and when they are set therein to hold and keep them so. The best are apt to decay and to go out of order. Ministers are to help against this, to get what is amiss rectified, and what is wanting supplied. This in general was Titus's work in Crete: And,

(2.) In special: *To ordain elders in every city*, i. e. Ministers who were mostly out of the elder, and most understanding and experienced Christians, or if younger in years, yet such as were grave and solid in their deportment and manners: These were to be set where there was any fit number of Christians, as in bigger towns and cities it first and mostly was; though villages too might have them where were Christians enough for it. These presbyters or elders were to have the ordinary and stated care and charge of the churches; to feed and govern them, and to perform all pastoral work and duty in and towards them. The word is used sometimes more largely for any that bear ecclesiastical function in the church, and so the apostles were presbyters or elders, 1 Pet. v. 1. but here it is meant of ordinary and fixed pastors, who laboured in the word and doctrine and were over the churches in the Lord; such as are described here throughout the chapter. This word presbyter some use it in the same sense as *sacerdos*, and translate it *priests*; a term not given to gospel ministers, unless in a figurative or allusive way, as all God's people are said to be made *kings and priests unto God* (*ἡγίασμένοι*); it is not *ἱερωσύνη* to offer up spiritual sacrifices of prayers and praises, and alms, &c. But properly we have no priests under the gospel; but Christ alone, the *high priest of our profession*, Heb. iii. 1. who offered up himself a sacrifice to God for us, and ever lives in virtue thereof to make intercession in our behalf. Presbyters here therefore are not proper priests to offer sacrifices, either typical or real; but only gospel ministers, to dispense Christ's ordinances, and to feed the church of God over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. 1. Observe, A church without a fixed and standing ministry in it is imperfect and wanting. 2. Observe, where a fit number of believers is, presbyters or elders must be set; their continuance in churches is as necessary as their first appointment, for perfecting the saints, and edifying the body of Christ, till all come to a perfect man in Christ, i. e. till the whole number of God's chosen be called and united to Christ in one body, and brought to their full stature and strength, and that measure of

grace that is proper and designed for them, *Ephes. iv. 12, 13.* Work this is that must and will be doing to the world's end, to which therefore the necessary and appointed means for it must last. What praise is due to God for such an institution! What thankfulness from those that enjoy the benefits of it! What pity and prayer for such as want it! *Pray the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* Faith comes by hearing, and is preserved, and maintained and made fruitful through it also. Ignorance and corruption, decays of good and increase of all evil, come by want of a teaching and quickening ministry. On such accounts therefore was Titus left in Crete, to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city; but this he was to do, not *ad libitum*, or according to his own will or fancy, but according to apostolical direction. Which is,

(3.) The rule of his proceeding. *As I had appointed thee*, probably when he was going from him, and in the presence and hearing of others; which now he may refer to, not so much for Titus's own sake as for the people's, that they might the more readily yield obedience unto Titus, knowing and minding that in what he did he was warranted and supported by apostolic injunctions and authority. As under the law all things were to be made according to the pattern shewn to Moses in the mount; so under the gospel all must be ordered and managed according to the direction of Christ, and of his chief ministers who were infallibly guided by him. Human traditions and inventions may not be brought into the church of God. Prudent disposals for carrying on the ends of Christ's appointments, according to the general rules of the word, such may, yea must be; but none may alter any thing in the substance of the faith or worship, or order and discipline of the churches. If an evangelist might not do any thing but by appointment, much less may others. The church is the house of God, and to him it belongs to appoint the officers and words of it as he pleaseth; the *as* here refers to the qualifications and character of the elder that he was to ordain. *Ordain elders in every city, as I appointed thee*, i. e. such as I then described, and shall now again more particularly point out to thee, which he does from the sixth verse to the ninth inclusive. And here is,

2. The second thing in the matter of the epistle, viz. The directions that the apostle gives Titus about ordination, shewing whom he should ordain, and whom not.

(1.) Of those whom he should ordain: He points out their qualifications and virtues; such as respect their life and manners; and such as relate to their doctrine: *The former* in the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses, and the *latter* in the ninth.

6. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly: 7. For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God: not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre: 8. But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate: 9. Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainayers.

[1.] Their qualifications respecting their life and manners are,

(1.) More general; *if any be blameless*, not absolutely without fault, so none are; for *there is none that liveth and sinneth not*: not altogether unblamed, that is rare and hard: Christ himself and his apostles were blamed, though not worthy of it: in Christ to be sure was nothing blameable; and his apostles were not such as their enemies charged them to be. But the meaning is, he must be one that lies not under an ill character; but rather must have a good report, even from those that are without; not grossly or scandalously guilty; so as would bring a reproach upon their holy function; he must not be such an one.

(2.) More particularly:

1. There is his relative character; in his own person he must be of conjugal chastity; *the husband of one wife*. The church of Rome saith the husband of no wife, but from the beginning it was not so: marriage is an ordinance from which no profession or calling is a bar, 1 Cor. ix. 5. *Have I not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles?* saith St. Paul. *Forbidden to marry* is one of the erroneous doctrines of the antichristian church, 1 Tim. iv. 3. Not that ministers must be married, that is not meant; but the husband of one wife, may be either not having divorced his wife and married another, as was too common among them of the circumcision, even for slight causes: or the husband of one wife, i. e. at one and the same time, no bigamist; not that he might be married to more than one wife successively; but being married he must have but one wife at once, not or two more, according to the too common sinful practice of those times, by a perverse imitation of the patriarchs, from which evil custom our Lord taught a reformation. Polygamy is scandalous in any, as also having an harlot or concubine with his lawful wife; such sin, or any wanton libidinous carriage, must be very remote from such as would enter into so sacred a function. And as to his children, *having faithful children*, i. e. obedient and good, brought up in the true Christian faith, and living according to it, at least as much as the parents can that it be so. It is for the honour of ministers, that their children be faithful and pious, and such as became their religion. *Not accused of riot or unruly*, i. e. not justly so accused, as having given ground and occasion for it; for otherwise the most innocent may be falsely so charged; they must look to it therefore there be no colour for such censure. Children so faithful and obedient and temperate, will be a good sign of faithfulness and diligence in the parent, who has so educated and instructed them; and from his faithfulness in the less, there may be encouragement to commit to him the greater, viz. the rule and government of the church of God.

The ground of this qualification is shewn from the nature of his office, *ver. 7. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.* These before termed presbyters or elders, are in this verse styled bishops, and such they were, having no ordinary fixed and standing officers above them. Titus's business here it is plain was but occasional, and his stay short as before was noted. Having ordained elders and settled things in their due form, he went and left all, for aught appears in scripture, in the hands of those elders whom here he calls bishops and stewards of God. We read not in the sacred writings of any successor he had in Crete; but to those elders or bishops was committed the full charge of feeding, and ruling, and watching over their flock; they wanted not any powers necessary for carrying on religion and the ministry of it among them, and deriving it down to succeeding ages. Now being such bishops and overseers of the flock, who were to be examples to them, and God's stewards to take care of the affairs of his house, to provide for and dispense to them things needful; here is great reason that their character should be clear and good; that they should be blameless. How else could it be, but that religion must suffer, their work be

be hindered, and souls prejudiced and endangered, whom they were set to save? These are the qualifications relative, with the ground of them.

(2.) The more absolute ones are expressed.

(1.) Negatively, shewing what an elder or bishop must not be, *not self-willed*. The prohibition is of large extent, excluding self-opinion, or overweening conceit of parts and abilities, and abounding in one's own sense; and self-love, and self-seeking, making *self* the centre of all: also self-confidence and trust, and self-pleasing, little regarding or setting by others; not proud, stubborn, froward, inflexible, set on one's own will and way; or churlish, as Nabal; to such sense do expositors carry it. A great honour it is to a minister not to be thus affected, to be ready to ask and to take advice, to be ready to pay as much as reasonably may be to the mind and will of others, becoming all things to all men that they may gain some. *Not soon angry*, *μὴ ὀργίζων*, *not one of a hasty angry temper*, soon and easily provoked and inflamed. How unfit are they to govern a church, who cannot govern themselves, nor their own turbulent unruly passions! The minister must be meek and gentle, and patient towards all men. *Not given to wine*; no greater reproach on a minister than to be a wine-bibber, one that loves it, and gives himself undue liberty this way, who continues at the wine or strong drink till it inflames him. Seasonable and moderate use of this, as of other of God's good creatures, is not unlawful. *Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities*, said Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 23. But excess therein is shameful in all, especially in a minister. *Wine takes away the heart*, turns the man into a brute; here most proper is that exhortation of the apostle, *Ephes. v. 18. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit*. Here is no exceeding, but in the former too easily there may be; take heed therefore of going too near the brink. *No striker*, viz. in any quarrelsome or contentious manner, not injuriously or out of revenge, with cruelty or unnecessary roughness. *Not given to filthy lucre*: Not greedy of it, as 1 Tim. iii. 3, whereby is not meant refusing a just return for their labours, in order to their necessary support and comfort; but not making gain their first or chief end; entering into the ministry or management of it with base worldly views. Nothing more unbecoming a minister, who is to direct his own and other eyes to another world, than to be too intent upon this; It is called *filthy lucre* from its defiling the soul that inordinately affects or greedily looks after it, as if it were any otherwise desirable than for the good and lawful uses of it. Thus of the negative part of the bishop's character. But,

[2.] Positively he must be, ver. 8. *A lover of hospitality*. As an evidence that he is not given to filthy lucre, but is willing to use what he hath to the best purposes, not laying up for himself, so as to hinder charitable laying out for the good of others: *receiving and entertaining strangers*, as the word imports a great and necessary office of love, especially in such times as then were, of affliction and distress, when Christians were put to flight and wander for safety from persecution and enemies, or in travelling to and fro, where were not such public houses for reception as in our days; nor it may be had many poor saints sufficiency of their own for such uses; then to receive and entertain them was good and pleasing to God. And such a spirit and practice, according to a utility and occasion, is very becoming such as should be examples of good works. *A lover of good men*, or of good things; ministers should be exemplary in both; this will evidence their open piety, and likeness to God and their master Jesus Christ: *Do good to all, but especially to them of the household of faith*, these that are the excellent of the earth, in whom should be all our delight. *Sober or prudent*, as the word signifies; a useful grace in a minister both for his ministerial and personal carriage and management. He should be a wise steward and one that is not rash, or foolish, or heady; but who can govern well his passions and affections. Just, viz. in things belonging to civil life, and moral righteousness and equity in dealings, giving to all their due. *Holy* in what concern religion; one that reverences and worships God, and is of a spiritual and heavenly conversation. *Temperate*; it comes from a word that signifies *strength*, and notes one that hath power over his appetite and affections, or in things lawful can, for good ends, restrain and hold them in. Nothing more becoming a minister can such things as these: sobriety, temperance, justice, and holiness; *sober* in respect of himself, *just* and righteous towards all men, and *holy* towards God. And thus of the qualifications respecting the minister's life and manners; relative and absolute, negative and positive; what he must not, and what he must be and do. Now,

[3.] As to doctrine:

(1.) Here is his duty, *holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught*, i. e. keeping close to the doctrine of Christ, the word of his grace, adhering thereto according to the instructions he hath received; holding it fast in his own belief and profession, and in teaching others. 1. Observe, The word of God revealed in the scripture, is a true and infallible word; the word of him that is the amen, the true and faithful witness, and whose Spirit guided the penman of it. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. 2. Observe, Ministers must hold fast, and hold forth the faithful word in their teaching and life. *I have kept the faith*, was Paul's comfort, 2 Tim. iv. 7. and *not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God*, there was his faithfulness, Acts xxii. 27.

(2.) Here is the end; *That he be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers*, i. e. to persuade and draw others to the true faith, and convince the contrary minded. Which how should he do it himself were uncertain or unsteady, not holding fast that *faithful word and sound doctrine*, which should be the matter of this teaching, and the means and ground of convincing those that oppose the truth? See we here summarily the great work of the ministry, to exhort those who are willing to know and do their duty; and to convince them that contradict; both which are to be done by *sound doctrine*, i. e. in a rational instructive way: by scripture arguments and testimonies, which are the infallible words of truth, what all may and should rest and be satisfied in and determined by. And thus of the qualifications of the elders that Titus was to ordain.

(2.) The apostle's directory shews whom he should reject or avoid, men of another character, the mention of whom is brought to in a reason of that care he had recommended about the qualifications of ministers, why they should be such and only such as he had described. The reasons he takes both from bad teachers and hearers among them, from ver. 10. to the end.

[1.] From bad teachers.

10. For there are many unruly and vain-talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision. 11. Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

(1.) Those false teachers are described. They were unruly, head-strong, and ambitious of power, refractory and untractable as some render it, and such as would not bear or submit themselves to the discipline and necessary order in the church, impatient of good government and of sound doctrines.

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And vain talkers and deceivers, conceiting themselves to be wise, but really foolish, and thence great talkers, and falling into errors and mistakes, and fond of them, were studious and industrious to draw others into the same. Many such there were, especially they of the circumcision, converts, as they pretend at least, from the Jews, who yet were for mingling Judaism and Christianity together, and so making a corrupt medley. These were the false teachers. And,

(2.) There is the apostle's direction how to deal with them, ver. 11. *Their mouths must be stopped*, not by outward force: Titus had no such power, nor are those the gospel methods: but by confutation and conviction, shewing them their error, *not giving place to them even for an hour*. In case of obduracy indeed, and breaking the peace of the church, and corrupting other churches, censures are to have place; the last means for recovering the faulty and preventing the hurt of many. Observe, Faithful ministers must timely oppose seducers, *that their folly being made manifest, they may proceed no further*.

(3.) The reasons are given for this; First, from the pernicious effects of their errors, *They subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not*, viz. The necessity of circumcision, and of keeping the law of Moses, &c. So subverting the gospel and souls of men; not some few only but whole families. It was unjustly charged on the apostles, *that they turned the world upside down*: but unjustly on these false teachers, that they drew many from the true faith to their ruin; the mouths of such should be stopped; especially considering, secondly, their base end in what they do, viz. *For filthy lucre's sake*, serving a worldly interest under pretence of religion: *love of money is the root of all evil*. Most fit that such should be resisted, and confuted and put to shame by sound doctrine and reason from the scripture. Thus of the grounds respecting the bad teachers.

[2.] In reference to their people or hearers, who are described from ancient testimony given of them.

12. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true; wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith: 14. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from the truth.

(1.) Here is the witness, ver. 12. *One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said*, i. e. one of the Cretians, not of the Jews, viz. Epimenides, a Greek poet, likely to know and unlikely to slander them; a prophet of their own; so their poets were accounted writers of divine oracles, as they esteemed them. These often witnessed against the vices of the people: Aratus, Epimenides, and others among the Greeks; Horace, Juvenal, and Persius, among the Latins: much smartness did they use against divers vices.

(2.) Here is the matter of his testimony, *Κρηται πάντες ψευδοί, κακοὶ θηρία, ὀλιγόβρωτοι*. The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies; even to a proverb, they were infamous for falsehood and lying, κακοὶ θηρία, to play the Cretian, or to lye, is the same; and they were compared to evil beasts for their fly hurtfulness and savage nature; and called *slow bellies*, for their laziness and sensuality, more inclined to eat than to work and live by some honest employment. Observe, Such scandalous vices as were the reproach of heathens, should be far from Christians. Falsehood and lying, invidious craft and cruelty, all beastly and sensual practices, and idleness and sloth, are sins condemned by the light of nature; for these were the Cretians taxed by their own poets. And,

(3.) Here is the verification of this by the apostle himself, ver. 13. *This witness is true*. The apostle saw too much ground for that character. The temper of some nations is more inclined to some vices than others. The Cretians were too generally such as here described, slothful, and ill-natured, false and perfidious, as the apostle himself vouches. And thence,

(4.) He instructs Titus how to deal with them. *Wherefore rebuke them sharply*. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he bid him *instruct with meekness*; but now when he writes to Titus, he bids him *rebuke them sharply*. The reason of the difference may be taken either from the different temper of Timothy and Titus; the former might have more keenness in his disposition, and be apt to be warm in reproof, whom therefore he bids to *rebuke with meekness*; and the latter (Titus) might be one of more mildness, therefore he quickens him, and bids him *rebuke sharply*; or rather it was from the difference of the case and people: Timothy had a more polite people to deal with, and therefore he must *rebuke them with meekness*; and Titus had to do with those who were more rough and uncultivated, and therefore he *must rebuke them sharply*: their corruptions were many and gross, and committed without shame or modesty, and therefore should be dealt with accordingly. There must in reproof be a distinguishing of sins and sins; some are more gross and heinous in their nature, or in the manner of their commission, with openness and boldness, to the great dishonour of God, danger and hurt to men; and between *sinners* and *sinners*; some are of a more tender and tractable temper, apt to be wrought on by gentleness, and to be sunk and discouraged by too much roughness and severity; others more hardy and stubborn, and needing more cutting language to beget remorse and shame. Wisdom therefore is requisite to temper and manage reproofs aright; as may be most likely to do good, Jude 22, 23. *Of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire*. The Cretians' sins and corruptions were many and great, and habitual; therefore they must be rebuked sharply. But that such direction might not be misconstrued.

(5.) Here is the end of it noted, *That they may be found in faith*, ver. 14. *Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth*, i. e. that they may be and shew themselves truly and effectually changed from such evil temper and manners, as those Cretians in their natural state lived in; and might not adhere to or regard (as some that were converted might be too ready to do) the Jewish traditions, and superstitious of the Pharisees, which would be apt to make them disrelish the gospel, and the sound and wholesome truth of it. 1. Observe, The sharpest reproofs must aim at the good of the reprov'd: they must not be of malice or hatred or ill-will, but of love; not to gratify pride or passion or any evil affection in the reprover, but to reclaim and reform the erroneous and the guilty. 2. Observe, Soundness in the faith is most desirable and necessary. This is the soul's health and vigour, pleasing to God, comfortable to the Christian, and what makes ready to be cheerful and constant in his duty. 3. Observe, A special means to soundness in the faith, is to turn away the ear from fables and fancies of men, 1 Tim. i. 4. *Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, that minister questions rather than edifying, which is in faith*. So chap. iv. 7. *Refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather to godliness*. Fancies and devices of men in the worship of God, are contrary to truth and piety. Jewish ceremonies and rites, that were at first divine appointments, the substance being come, and their season and use over, are now but unwarranted commands of men, which not

only stand not with, but turn from the truth, i. e. the pure gospel truth and spiritual worship, set up by Christ instead of that bodily service under the law. 4. Observe, A fearful judgment it is to be turned away from the truth; to leave Christ for Moses, the spiritual worship of the gospel for the carnal ordinances of the law; or the true divine institutions and precepts for human inventions and appointments. *Who hath bewitched you, (said Paul to the Galatians, chap. iii. 1.) that ye should not obey the truth? Having begun in the Spirit are you made perfect by the flesh?* Thus having shewn the end of sharply reproving the corrupt and vicious Cretians, that they might be found in the faith, and not heed Jewish fables and commands of men.

(6.) He gives the reasons of this, from the liberty we have by the gospel from legal observances, and the evil and mischief of a Jewish spirit under the Christian dispensation, in the two last verses, viz.

15. Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled. 16. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

To good Christians that are found in the faith, and thereby purified, *all things are pure*; meats, and drinks, and such things that were forbidden under the law, and in which observances some were still apt to stick, in these there is now no such distinction. *all are pure*, i. e. lawful and free in their use; *but to them that are defiling and unbelieving, nothing is pure*; things lawful and good they abuse and turn to sin; they suck poison out of that from which others draw sweetness; because their mind and conscience, those leading faculties, are defiled; a taint is derived to all they do. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xx. 8. And chap. xxiv. *The plowing of the wicked is sin*, not in itself, but as done by him; the carnality of the mind and heart mars all the labour of the hand.

Objection. But are not these Judaizers, as you call them, men that profess religion, and speak well of God and Christ, and righteousness of life; and should they be so severely taxed? *Answer*, ver. 16. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* There are many who in word and tongue profess to know God, and yet in their lives and conversations deny and reject him; their practice is a contradiction to their profession. *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness*, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. *Being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* The apostle instructing Titus to rebuke sharply, does himself rebuke sharply; he gives them very hard words; yet doubtless no harder than their case warranted and their need required. *Being abominable*, *ῥαδιος*, but deserveth that God and good men should turn away their eyes from them as nauseous and offensive. *And disobedient*, *ἀπειθής*, unpersuadable, and unbelieving: They might do divers things; but it was not the obedience of faith, not what was commanded or short of the command. *To every good work reprobate*, without skill or judgment to do any thing aright. See the miserable condition of hypocrites, such as have a form of godliness but without the power; yet be we not so ready to fix this charge on others, as careful that it agree not to ourselves, but that there be not in us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but that we be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God, Phil. i. 10, 11.

C H A P. III.

The apostle here directs Titus about the faithful discharge of his own office, generally, ver. 1. and particularly, as to several sorts of persons, ver. 2—10. and gives the grounds of those and of other following directions, ver. 11—14. with a summary direction in the close, ver. 15.

1. **B**UT speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

3. Here is the thing in the matter of the epistle. In the chapter foregoing the apostle had directed Titus about matters of government, and to set in order the things that were wanting in the churches: Now here he exhorts him,

(1.) Generally to a faithful discharge of his own office. His ordaining others to preach, would not excuse himself from preaching, nor might he take care of ministers and elders only, but he must instruct private Christians also in their duty. The adversative particle (*but*) here points back to the corrupt teachers, who vented fables, things vain and unprofitable; in opposition to them, faith he, *but speak thou the things that become sound doctrine*, i. e. what is agreeable to the word, which is pure and uncorrupt, healthful, and nourishing to eternal life. 1. Observe, The true doctrines of the gospel are *sound doctrines*, formally and effectively; they are in themselves good and holy, and make the believers so; they make fit for, and vigorous in the service of God. 2. Observe, Ministers must be careful to teach only such truths: If common talk of Christians must be *uncorrupt to the use of edifying, such as may minister grace to the hearers*, Ephes. iv. 29. much more must ministers preaching be such. Thus the apostle exhorts Titus generally: And then,

(2.) Specially and particularly he instructs him to apply this sound doctrine to several sorts of persons, from ver. 2—10. Ministers must not stay in general, but must divide to every one his portion; what belongs to his age, or place, or condition of life; they must be particular, as well as practical in their preaching; they must teach men their duty, and must teach all and each his duty. Here is an excellent Christian directory, accommodated to the old and to the young: to men and women: to the preacher himself and unto servants.

[1.] To the aged men.

2. That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience:

By aged men some understand elders by office, including deacons, &c. but it is rather to be taken of the aged in point of years. Old disciples of Christ must carry themselves in every thing agreeably to the Christian doctrine. That the aged men be sober, not thinking that the decays of nature, which they feel in old age, will justify them in any inordinacy or intemperance, whereby they conceit to repair them; they must keep measure in things, both for health and for fitness, for counsel and example to the younger.

Grace: Levity is unbecoming in any, but especially in the aged: they should be composed and stayed, grave in habit, and speech, and behaviour; garrulosity in dress, levity and vanity in the carriage, how unbecoming is it in their years? *Temperate*: Moderate and prudent, one that governs well his passions and affections, so as not to be hurried away by them to any thing that is evil or indecent. *Sound in the faith*; i. e. sincere and steadfast, constantly adhering to the truth of the gospel, not fond of novelties, or ready to run into corrupt opinions or parties, or to be taken with Jewish fables or traditions, or the dotages of their rabbins. The full of years should be full of grace and goodness, the inner man renewing more and more as the outer decays. *In charity*, of love; this is fitly joined with faith, which works by and must be seen in love, love to God and men, and foundation therein; it must be sincere love without dissimulation; love of God for himself, and of men for God's sake, the duties of the second table must be done in virtue of those of the first; love to men as men, and to the saints as the excellent of the earth, in whom must be special delight; and love at all times, in adversity as well as prosperity: Thus there must be soundness in charity or love. And in patience: Aged persons are apt to be peevish and fretful and passionate; and therefore need be on their guard against such infirmities and temptations; faith and love and patience, are three main Christian graces, and soundness in these is much of gospel perfection. There is *enduring* and *waiting* patience, both must be looked after: to bear evils becomingly and contentedly, to wait the good till we are fit for it and it for us, being followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Thus to aged men.

[2.] To the aged women.

3. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.

These also must be instructed and warned. Some by these aged women understand the deaconesses, who were mostly employed in looking after the poor and tending the sick; but it is rather to be taken as we render it, of all aged women professing religion, they must be in behaviour as becometh holiness; both men and women must accommodate their behaviour to their profession; these virtues before-mentioned, viz. *Sobriety, gravity, temperance, soundness in the faith, and charity, and patience*, recommended to aged men, are not proper to them only, but applicable to both sexes, and to be looked to by aged women as well as men: women are to hear and learn their duty from the word, as well as the men; there is not one way of salvation for one sex or sort, and another for another; but both must learn and practice the same things, both as aged and as Christians: the virtues and duties are common. The aged women likewise, i. e. as well as the men, be in behaviour as becometh holiness; or as becometh and is proper for holy persons, such as they profess to be and should be; keeping a pious decency and decorum in clothing and gesture, in looks and speech, and all other deportment; and this from an inward principle and habit of holiness, influencing and ordering the outward carriage at all times. Observe, Though express scripture do not occur, or be not brought for every word, or look, or fashion in particular; yet general rules there are, according to which all must be ordered. 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* And Phil. iv. 8. *Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lively, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* And here whatsoever things are becometh to. *Not false accusers*, *μὴ ῥαδιόλογαι*, no calumniators or sowers of discord, slandering and backbiting their neighbours, a great and too common fault; not only loving to speak, but to speak ill of people, and to separate very friends. A slanderer is one whose tongue is set on fire of hell: so much, and so directly to these do the devil's work, that for it the devil's name is given to such. This is a sin contrary to the great duties of love and justice and equity between one another; it springs often from malice and hatred, or envy, and such like evil causes, to be shunned as well as the effect. *Not given to much wine*, the word notes to such addictedness thereto as to be under the power and mastery of it. This is unseemly an evil in any, but especially in this sex and age, and too much to be found among the Greeks of that time and place. How immodest and shameful, corrupting and destroying purity both of body and mind? Of what evil example and tendency, unfitting for the next thing, which is a positive duty of aged matrons, viz. to be teachers of good things: Not public preachers, that is forbidden, 1 Cor. xiv. 34. *I permit not a woman to speak in the church*; but otherwise, teach they may and should, viz. by example and good life; Whence observe, Those, whose victims and carriage as becomes holiness, are thereby teachers of good things; and besides that, they may and should also teach by doctrinal instructions at home and in a private way. Prov. xxxi. 1. *The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy his mother taught him.* Such a woman is praised, ver. 26. *She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.* Teachers of good things is opposed to things corrupt, or to what is trifling and vain, of no good life or tendency; old wives fables or superstitious sayings and observances; in opposition to these their business is, and they may be called on to it, to be teachers of good things. For,

[3.] There are lessons for young women also, which the aged women must teach, and instruct and advise them in the duties of religion according to their years.

4. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. 5. To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

For teaching such things many times they have better access than the men, even than ministers have; and which therefore they must improve in instructing the young women, especially the young wives; for he speaks of their duty to their husbands and children: These young women the more aged must teach.

(1.) To bear a good personal character, viz. To be sober and discreet, contrary to that vanity and rashness which younger years are subject to; Discreet in their judgments, and sober in their affections and carriage. Discreet and chaste stand well together: many expose themselves to fatal temptations, by that which at first might be but indiscretion, Prov. ii. 11. *Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee from the evil way.* Chaste and keepers at home, are well joined too. Dinah when she went to see the daughters of the land, lost her chastity. Those whose home is their prison, it is to be feared their chastity is their fetters. Not but occasions there are, and will be of going abroad, but a gadding temper for merriment and company sake, to the neglect of domestic affairs, or from uneasiness at being in her place,

place, that is the opposite evil intended, which is commonly accompanied with or draws after it other evils. 1 Tim. v. 13, 14. *They learn to be idle, wandering from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.* Their business is to guide the house, and should give no occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Good, viz. Generally, in opposition to all vice; and especially, in her place, kind and helpful and charitable; as Dorcas, *full of good works, and almsdeeds.* Also it may have, as some think, a more particular sense, one of a meek and yet cheerful spirit and temper, not fullen or bitter or taunting, or fretting and galling any; not of a troublesome or jarring disposition, uneasily in herself and to those about her; but of a good nature and pleasing conversation, and likewise helpful by her advice and pains: Thus *building her house and doing her husband good, and not evil all her days.* Thus in their personal character *sober, discreet, chaste, keepers at home, and good:* And,

(2.) In their relative capacities, *to love their husbands and to be obedient to them:* And where there is true love, this will be no difficult command. God in nature, and by his will, hath made this subordination, 1 Tim. ii. 12. *I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man: and ver. 13. the reason is added, For Adam was first formed, then Eve. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression:* She fell first, and was the means of seducing her husband. She was given to be an *helper*, but proved a most grievous *hinderer*, even the instrument of his fall and ruin, on which the bond of subjection was confirmed, and tied faster on her. Gen. iii. 16. *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee, viz. with less easiness, it may be, than before. It is, therefore, doubly enjoined: First in innocency, when was settled a subordination of nature. Adam being first formed and then Eve, and the woman being taken out of the man; and then upon the fall, the woman being first in the transgression and seducing the man; here now began to be a subjection not so easy and comfortable, being part of the penalty in her case, but yet through Christ is this nevertheless a sanctified state, Eph. v. 22. *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord:* as owning Christ's authority in them, whose image they bear; *for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body.* God would have a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, held forth in the husband's over the wife: Christ is the head of the church, to protect and save it, and to supply it with all good, and secure or deliver it from evil; and so is the husband over the wife, to keep her from injuries, and to provide comfortably for her, according to his ability: Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be unto their own husbands, as is fit in the Lord, Col. iii. 18. i. e. as stands with the law of Christ, and is for his and the Father's glory. It is not then an absolute, or unlimited, or a slavish subjection that is required; but a loving subordination to prevent disorder or confusion, and to further all the ends of the relation. Thus in reference unto the husbands, wives must be instructed in the duties of love and subjection to them. And to love their children, not with a natural affection only, but a spiritual; a love springing from an holy sanctified heart, and regulated by the word; not a fond foolish love, indulging them in evil, neglecting due reproof and correction where necessary; but it must be a regular Christian love, shewing itself in their pious education, forming their life and manners aright, taking care of their souls as well as of their bodies; of their spiritual welfare as well as of their temporal; of the former chiefly and in the first place: The reason is added, *viz. That the word of God may not be blasphemed.* Failures in such relative duties would be greatly to the reproach of Christianity. What are these the better for this their new religion? would the infidels be ready to say. The word of God and gospel of Christ is pure, and excellent, and glorious in itself; and the excellency of it should be expressed and shewn in the lives and carriage of its professors, especially in relative duties; failures here bring disgrace, Rom. ii. 24. *The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.* Judge what a God he is, would they be ready to say, by these his servants; and what his word, and doctrine, and religion is, by these his followers. Thus would Christ be wounded in the house of his friends. Thus of the duties of the younger women.*

[4.] Here is the duty of young men.

6. Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

They are apt to be eager and hot, thoughtless and precipitant; therefore must be earnestly called upon and exhorted to be considerate, not rash; advisable and submissive, not wilful and headstrong; humble and mild, not haughty and proud; for there are more young people ruined by pride than by any other sin. The young in years should be grave and solid in their deportment and manners, joining the seriousness of age with the liveliness and vigour of youth. This will make even those younger years to pass to good purpose, and yield matter of comfortable reflection, when the evil days come; it will be preventive of much sin and sorrow, and laying the ground for doing and enjoying much good. Such shall not mourn at the *last*, but have peace and comfort in death, and after it a glorious crown of life. Now with these instructions to Titus what he should teach others, the aged men and women, and the younger of both sexes; Titus himself probably at this time being a young man also, the apostle inserts,

[5.] Some directions to himself. He could not expect so successfully to teach others, if he carried not himself well both in his conversation and preaching.

7. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. 8. Sound speech that cannot be condemned: that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

(1.) Here is direction for his conversation: *In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works:* Without this he would pull down with one hand what he built with the other. Observe, Preachers of good works must be patterns of them also; good doctrine and good life must go together. *Thou that teachest another, teachest not thou thyself?* A defect here is a great blemish and a great hindrance. In all things; some read *above all things*, or *above all men.* Instructing and informing others in the particulars of their duty, is necessary; and above all things example, especially that of the teacher himself, is useful; hereby both light and influence are more likely to go together. Let them see a lively image of those virtues and graces in thy life, which must be in theirs. Example may both teach and impress the things taught; when they see purity and gravity, sobriety and all good life in thee, they may be more easily won and brought thereto themselves; they may become pious and holy, sober and righteous, as thou art. Ministers must be *examples to the flock*, and the people *followers of them, as they are of Christ.* And here is direction,

(2.) For his teaching and doctrine, as well as for his life: *In doctrine,*

shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned. They must make it appear that the design of their preaching is purely to advance the honour of God, and interest of Christ and his kingdom, and the welfare and happiness of souls; that it was not with secular views this office was entered into or is used; not from ambition or covetousness, but a pure aim at the spiritual ends of its institution. In their preaching therefore the display of wit or parts, or of human learning or oratory, is not to be affected; but *sound speech* must be used, *which cannot be condemned.* Scripture language, as far as well may be, in expressing scripture truth: This is *sound speech that cannot be condemned.* We have more than once these duties of a minister set together, 1 Tim. iv. 16. *Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine:* and ver. 12. of the same chapter. *Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of believers in word.* In thy speech, as a Christian, being grave and serious and to the use of edifying; and in thy preaching, that it be the pure word of God, or what is agreeable to it and founded on it; thus be an example *in word:* And in conversation: the life corresponding with the doctrine. In doing this *thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.* In 2 Tim. iii. 10. *Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life, faith the same apostle, viz. how agreeable these have been.* And so must it be with others; their teaching must be agreeable with the word, and their life with their teaching. This is the true and good minister, 1 Thess. ii. 9, 10. *Labouring night and day, we preach to you the gospel of God: and ye are our witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you.* This must be looked to us the next words shew: Which are,

(3.) The reason both for the strictness of the minister's life, and the gravity and soundness of his preaching: *That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed having no evil thing to say of you.* Adversaries would be seeking occasion to reflect, and would do so, could they find any thing amiss in doctrine or life: but if both were right and good, such ministers might set calumny itself at defiance; they would have no evil thing to say justly, and and so must be ashamed of their opposition. Observe, Faithful ministers will have enemies watching for their halting; such as will endeavour to find or pick holes in their teaching or behaviour; the more need therefore for them to look to themselves, that no just occasion be found against them. Opposition and calumny, perhaps, may not be escaped, men of corrupt minds will resist the truth, and often reproach the preachers and professors of it; but let them see, that *with well doing they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;* that *when they speak evil of them as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ.* This is the direction to Titus himself, and so of the duties of free persons, male and female, old and young. Then follow,

[6.] The directions respecting servants.

9. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again. 10. Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Servants may not think their mean and low state puts them beneath God's notice, or the obligation of his laws; that because they are servants of men they are thereby discharged from serving of God. No; servants must know and do their duty to their earthly masters, but with an eye to their heavenly one: and Titus must not only instruct and warn earthly masters of their duties, but servants also of theirs, both in his public preaching and private admonitions. Servants must attend the ordinances of God for their instruction and comfort, as well as the masters themselves. In this direction to Titus there are the duties themselves, to which he must exhort servants, and a weighty consideration, wherewith he was to enforce them.

(1.) The duties themselves are these:

(1.) *To be obedient to their own masters.* This is the prime duty, that by which they are characterized, Rom. vi. 16. *His servants ye are to whom ye obey.* There must be inward subjection, and dutiful respect and reverence in the mind and thoughts. *If I be a master, where is my fear?* said God, i. e. the dutiful affection you shew to me, together with the suitable outward significations and expressions of it, in doing what I command you. This must be in servants, their will must be subject to their master's will, and their time and labour at their master's disposal and command, 1 Pet. ii. 18. *Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.* The duty results from the will of God, and the relation in which, by his providence, he hath put such; not from the quality of the person: If he be a *master*, the duties of a *servant* are to be paid to him as such. Servants therefore are to be exhorted to be obedient to their own masters. And,

(2.) *To please them well in all things, i. e. in all lawful things, and such as belong to them to command; or at least as are not contrary to the will of their great and superior Lord.* We are not to understand it either of obeying or pleasing them absolutely, without any limitation; but always with a reserve of God's right, which may in no case be intrenched upon. If his command and the earthly master's come in competition, we are instructed to *obey God rather than man;* but servants then must be upon good grounds in this, that there is an inconsistency, else are they not held to be excused: And not only must the will of God be the measure of the servants' obedience, but the reason of it also; and must be done with a respect to him, and in virtue of his authority, and for pleasing him primarily and chiefly, Col. iii. 22, 23, 24. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men please; but with singleness of heart, fearing God. And whenever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.* In serving the earthly master according to Christ's will, he is served; and such shall be rewarded by him accordingly.

But, *Question,* How are servants to please their masters in all things, and yet not be men-pleasers? *Answer,* Men-pleasers in the faulty sense, are such as eye men alone, or chiefly, in what they do, leaving God out or subordinating him to man: when the will of man carry it, though against God's will, or man's pleasure is more regarded than his: when that can content them, that the earthly master is pleased, though God be displeased: or more care, or more satisfaction is taken in man's being pleased, than in God's: this is sinful man-pleasing, which all must take heed of Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7. *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, with singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, who look at nothing but the favour or displeasure of men, or nothing so much as that; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men, viz. Not to them chiefly, but to Christ who requires, and who will reward any good done, whether by bond or free. Observe therefore Christian liberty stands well with civil servitude and subjection. Persons may serve men, and yet be the servants of Christ, these are not contrary, but subordinate; so far as serving men*

is according to Christ's will and for his sake. Christ came not to destroy or prejudice civil order and differences: *Art thou called, being a servant? Care not for it*, 1 Cor. vii. 21. Let not that trouble thee, as if it were a condition unworthy of a Christian, or wherein the person so called is less pleasing unto God; for he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman, not free from that service, but free in it; free spiritually, though not in a civil sense: *Likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ's servant*; he is bound to him, though he be not under civil subjection to any: *So that bond or free, all are one in Christ*. Servants therefore should not regret or be troubled at their condition, but be faithful and cheerful in their station wherein God hath set them; striving to please their masters in all things: Hard it may be under some churlish Nabals, but must be endeavoured all that they are able.

(3.) *Not answering again*; not contradicting them or disputing it with them; not giving them any disrespectful or provoking language. Job complained of his servants, that he called them, and they gave him no answer; and that was faulty another way: *Non respondere pro convitio est*, such silence is contempt; but here it is respect, rather to take a check or reproof with humble silence, not making any confident or bold replies. When conscious of a fault, to palliate or stand in justification of it, doubles it. Yet this not answering again excludes not *turning away wrath with a soft answer*, when season and circumstances admit. Good and wise masters will be ready to hear and do right; but answering unseasonably, or in an unseemly manner, or where the case admits not an excuse, to be pert or confident, shews want of such humility and meekness, which such relation requires.

(4.) *Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity*. This is another great essential of good servants to be *honest*; never converting that to their own use which is their master's, nor wasting the goods they are intrusted with: that is *purloining*. They must be just and true, and do for them as they would or should for themselves, Prov. xxviii. 24. *Who so robbeth his father or his mother, and saith it is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer*: he will be ready to join with them. Thus having such light thoughts of taking beyond what is right, though it be from a parent or master, is like to harden conscience to go further; it is both wicked in itself, and it tends to more. Be it so that the master is hard and strict, scarce making sufficient provision for servants; yet may they not be their own carvers, or go about by theft to right themselves; they must bear their lot, committing their cause to God for righting and providing for them. I speak not of cases of extremity, for preserving life, the necessities for which the servant hath a right to. *Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity*: he must not only not steal or waste, but must improve his master's goods, and promote his prosperity and thriving what he can. He that increased not his master's talent, is accused of unfaithfulness, though he had not embezzled or lost it. Faithfulness in a servant lies in ready, punctual and thorough executing his master's orders; keeping his secrets and counsels, dispatching his affairs, and managing with frugality, and to as much just advantage for his master as he is able; looking well to his trusts, and preventing what he can, all spoil or loss, or damage. This is a way to bring a blessing upon himself, as the contrary often brings utter ruin, Luke xvi. 12. *If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own?* Thus of the duties themselves, to which servants to be exhorted. Then,

(2.) Here is the consideration with which Titus was to enforce them. *That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; i. e. that they may recommend the gospel and Christ's holy religion to the good opinion of them that are without, by their meek, humble, obedient, and faithful carriage in all things. Even servants, though they may think that such as they in so low, and inferior a condition, can do little to bring repute to Christianity or adorn the doctrine of Christ, and set forth the excellencies of his truth and ways; yet if they are careful to do their duty, it will redound to the glory of God and credit of religion. The unbelieving masters would think the better of that despised way, which was every where spoken against, when they found that their servants, which were Christians, were better than their other servants; more obedient and submissive, more just and faithful, and diligent in their places. True religion is an honour to the professors of it; and they should see that they do not any dishonour to it, but adorn it rather in all that they are able. Our light must shine among men, so that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. And thus of the apostle's directions to Titus, about the discharge of his office, in reference to several sorts of persons. Next follow,

(3.) The grounds of considerations upon which all the directions are urged, taken from the nature and design of the gospel, and the end of Christ's death.

11. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; 12. Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; 13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 14. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

[1.] Here are motives from the nature and design of the gospel. Let young and old, men and women, masters and servants, and Titus himself; let all sorts do their respective duties, for this is the very aim and business of Christianity, to instruct, and help, and form persons under all distinctions and relations, to a right frame and carriage. For this,

(1.) They are put under the dispensation of the grace of God, so the gospel is called, Eph. iii. 2. It is grace in respect of the spring of it, the free favour and good-will of God, not any merit or desert in the creature, and as manifesting and declaring this good-will in an eminent and signal manner; and as it is the means of conveying and working grace in the heart of believers. Now grace is obliging and constraining to goodness; *Let no sin reign, but yield yourselves unto God; for you are not under the law, but under grace*, Rom. vi. 12, 13, 14. *The love of Christ restrains us*, viz. not to live to self, but to him, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Without this effect grace is received in vain.

(2.) This gospel grace brings salvation: it reveals, and offers and ensures it to believers. Salvation from sin and wrath, from death and hell: whence it is called the word of life; it brings to faith and so to life; the life of holiness now, and of happiness hereafter. The law is the ministration of death, but the gospel the ministration of life and peace. This therefore must be received as salvation, its rules minded, its commands obeyed, that the end of it may be obtained, *the salvation of the soul*. And more inexcusable will the neglectors of this grace of God bringing salvation now be since,

(3.) *It hath appeared*, or shone out, viz. more clearly and industriously than ever before. The old dispensation was comparatively dark and sha-

dowy, this is a clear and shining light; and as it is now more bright, so more diffused and extensive also. For,

(4.) *It hath appeared unto all men*; not to the Jews only, as the glory of God appeared at mount Sinai to that particular people, but out of the ken of all others; but gospel grace is open to all, and all are invited to come and partake of the benefit of it; Gentiles as well as Jews. The publication of it is free and general. *Disciple all nations: Preach the gospel to every creature*.

The pale is broken down, there is no such inclosure now as formerly, Rom. xvi. 26. *The preaching of Jesus Christ, which was kept secret since the world began, now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*. The doctrine of grace and salvation by the gospel is for all ranks, and conditions of men; slaves and servants as well as masters: therefore engaging and encouraging all to receive and believe it, and walk suitably to it, adoring it in all things.

(5.) This gospel revelation is to teach, and not by way of information and instruction only, as the schoolmaster does his scholars; but by way of precept and command, as a sovereign that gives laws unto his subjects. It directs what to shun, and what to follow; what to avoid and what to do. The gospel is not for speculations only or chiefly, but for practice and right ordering of life. It teaches,

(1.) To abandon sin; *Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*: to renounce and have no more to do with these, as we have had. *Put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt*; i. e. the whole body of sins, distributed here into *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts*. Put away *ungodliness*, and irreligion, all unbelief, neglect or disobedience of the divine being, not loving, or fearing, or trusting in him, or obeying him as we should, neglecting his ordinances, slighting his worship, profaning his name or day, &c. Thus denying *ungodliness*, i. e. hate and put it away. And *worldly lusts*; all corrupt and vicious desires and affections that prevail in worldly men and carry out to worldly things: *The lust of the flesh, and of the eye, and the pride of life*; all sensuality and filthiness, covetous desires and ambition, seeking and valuing more the praise of men than of God; put away these. An earthly sensual conversation suits not an heavenly calling. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with affections and lusts*. They have done it by covenant-engagement and promise, and have initially and pre- vailingly done it in act; and are going on in the work, cleansing themselves more and more from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Thus the gospel first unteaches that which is evil, to abandon sin; and then,

(2.) To make conscience of that which is good. *To live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. Religion is not made up of negatives only, there must be doing good as well as eschewing evil; in these conjunctly in sincerity proved, and the gospel adorned. We should live *soberly* with respect to ourselves, in the due government of our appetites and passions, keeping the limits of moderation and temperance, avoiding all inordinate excesses. *Righteously* towards all men; rendering to all their due, and injuring none, but rather doing good to others according to our ability and their need. This seems a part of justice and righteousness, for we are not born for ourselves alone, and therefore may not live only to ourselves. *We are members one of another, and must seek every man another's wealth*; 1 Cor. x. 24, and chap. xii. 25. The public especially, which includes the interests of all, must have the regards of all. *Selfishness* is a sort of *unrighteousness*, it robs others of that share in us which is their due. How amiable then will a just and righteous carriage be? It secures and promotes all interests, not particularly only, but general and public, and so makes for the peace and happiness of the world. Live *righteously* therefore as well as *soberly*; and *godly* towards God in the duties of his worship and service. Regards to him indeed should run through all, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God*. Personal and relative duties must be done in obedience to his command, with due aim at pleasing and honouring him, from principles of holy love and fear of him. But there is an express and direct duty also that we owe to God, viz. belief and acknowledgment of his being and perfections, paying him eternal and external worship and homage; loving, and fearing, and trusting in him; and depending on him, and devoting ourselves to him; observing all these religious duties and ordinances that he hath appointed; praying to him, and praising of him, meditating on his word and works. This is *godliness*, looking and coming to God, as our state now is, not immediately, but as he has manifested himself in Christ; so does the gospel direct and require. To go to God any other way, viz. by saints or angels, is unsuitable, yea, contrary to the gospel rule and warrant. All communications from God to us are through his Son, and our returns must also be by him. God in Christ we must look at as the object of our hope and worship. Thus must we exercise ourselves to *godliness*, without which there can be no adorning that gospel which is according to it, which teaches and requires such a deportment. A gospel conversation must needs be a godly conversation, expressing our love and fear and reverence of God; our hope and trust and confidence in him, as manifested in his Son. *We are the circumcision*, who have in truth what was signified by that sacrament, *who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*. See in how little a compass our duty is comprised: it is put into a few words, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*. The Gospel teaches us not only how to believe and hope well, but also to live well, as becomes that faith and hope in this present world, but as expectants of another and better: *There is the world that now is, and that which is to come, the present is the time and place of our trial, and the gospel teaches us to live well here, but now as our final state, but with an eye chiefly to a future*. For,

(3.) It teaches in all to look for the glories of another world, to which a sober, righteous, and godly life in this is preparative: *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Hope, by a metonymy, is put for the thing hoped for, viz. Heaven and the felicities thereof, called emphatically *that hope*, because it is the great thing we look and long wait for; and a *blessed hope*, because when attained, we shall be completely happy for ever. *And the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. This notes both the time of the accomplishing our hope, and the sureness and greatness of it, it will be at the second appearing of Christ, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's, and of the holy angels, Luke ix. 26. His own glory which he had before the world was: and his Father's being the express image of his person, and as God-man, his delegated ruler and judge; and of the holy angels, as his ministers and glorious attendants. His first coming was in meanness to satisfy justice and purchase happiness; his second will be in majesty to bestow and institute his people in it. *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation*, Heb. ix. 28. *The great God and our Saviour, (or even our Saviour) Jesus Christ*; for they are not to subjects but one only, as appears by the single article *τὸ θεὸν καὶ τὸν υἱόν*, not *τὰ θεὸν καὶ τὸν υἱόν*, and so is rendered, 1 Cor. x. xv. 24. *When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; *τὸν θεὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα*. Christ then is the great God, not figuratively, as magistrates and others are sometimes called gods, or as appearing

appearing and acting in the name of God, but properly and absolutely the true God, 1 John v. 20. *The mighty God*. Isa. ix. 6. *Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. In his second coming he will reward his servants, and bring them to glory with him. 1. Observe, there is a common and blessed hope for all true Christians in the other world. *If in this life only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men the most miserable*, 1 Cor. xv. 19. By hope is meant the thing hoped for, viz. Christ himself, who is called *our hope*, 1 Tim. i. 1. and blessedness in and through him, even riches of glory, Eph. i. 18. Hence fitly termed here *that blessed hope*. 2. Observe, The design of the gospel is to stir up all to a good life by this blessed hope, 1 Pet. i. 13. *Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. To the same purpose here, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope*; not as mercenaries but as dutiful and thankful Christians. *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God*. 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. *Looking and hastening, i. e. expecting and diligently preparing for it*. 3. Observe, At and in the glorious appearing of Christ will be the blessed hope of Christians be attained; for their felicity will be that, *To be where he is, and to behold his glory*, John xvii. 24. The glory of the great God and our Saviour will then break out as the sun: Though in the exercise of his judiciary power he will appear as the Son of Man, yet will he be mightily declared to be the Son of God too: The divinity on earth was much veiled, will shine out then as the sun in its strength. Hence the work and design of the gospel is to raise the heart to wait for this second appearing of Christ. *We are begotten again to a lively hope of it*, 1 Pet. i. 3, turned to serve the living God, and wait for his Son from Heaven, 1 Thess. i. 10. Christians are marked by this, *expecting their master's coming*, Matt. xxiv. 45. *Loving his appearance*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Look we then to this hope; let our loins be girt, and our lights burning, and ourselves like those that wait for our Lord; the day or hour we know not, but *he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*, Heb. x. 37. 4. Observe, The comfort and joy of Christians is the great God, and will gloriously manifest himself at his second coming. Power and love, majesty and mercy, will then appear together in the highest lustre, to the terror and confusion of the wicked; but to the everlasting triumph and rejoicing of the godly. Were he not thus the great God, and not a mere creature, he could not be their Saviour nor their hope. Thus of the considerations to enforce the directions for all sorts to their respective duties from the nature and design of the gospel, which is to teach and persuade to those things. And herewith is connected another ground, viz.

[2.] From the end of Christ's death, ver. 14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. To bring us to holiness and happiness was the end of Christ's death, as well as the scope of his doctrine. Here we have,

(1.) The purchaser of salvation, *Who, i. e. Jesus Christ, that great God and our Saviour*, who saves not simply as God, much less as man alone; but as God-man, two natures in one person: Man, that he might obey, and suffer and die for men, and be meet to deal with him and for him; and God, that he might support the manhood, and give worth and efficacy to his undertakings, and have due regard to the rights and honour of the Deity, as well as the good of his creature, and bring about the latter to the glory of the former. Such an one became us, and this was,

(2.) The price of our redemption. *He gave himself*; the Father gave him, but he gave himself too; and in the freeness and voluntariness as well as the greatness of the offering lay the acceptableness and merit of it. John x. 17, 18. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself*. So John xvii. 19 *For their sakes I sanctify myself, i. e. separate and devote myself to this work, to be both a priest and a sacrifice to God for the sins of men*. The human nature was the offering, and the divine the altar, sanctifying the gift, and the whole the act of the person. *He gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. *Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. He was the priest and sacrifice too. *We are redeemed not with silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, called the blood of God, Acts xx. 28, i. e. of him who is God.

(3.) The persons for whom. For us, viz. poor perishing sinners, gone off from God, and turned rebels against him. He gave himself for us, not only for our good, but in our stead. Messiah was cut off, not for himself, but for us: *He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. *He was made sin for us, i. e. an offering and sacrifice for sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. Wonderful condescension and grace! *He loved us and gave himself for us*; what can we do less than love and give up ourselves to him? Especially considering,

(4.) The ends of his giving himself for us, viz.

(1.) *That he might redeem us from all iniquity*. This is fitted to the first lesson, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*: Christ gave himself to redeem us from these, therefore put them away. To love and live in sin, is to trample under foot redeeming blood, to despise and reject one of the greatest benefits of it, and to set counter to its design.

But, *Question*, How could the short sufferings of Christ redeem us from all iniquity? *Answer*, Through the infinite dignity of his person: He who was God suffered though not as God. The acts and properties of either nature are attributed to the person, God purchased his church with his own blood, Acts xx—20. 28. Could payment be made at once, no need of suffering for ever. A mere creature could not do this, from the finiteness of his nature; but God-man could. *The great God and our Saviour gave himself for us*: that accounts for it. *By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*, Heb. ix. 25, 26. He needed not to offer himself often, nor could he be holden of death, when he had once undergone it. Happy end and fruit of Christ's death, redemption from all iniquity! Christ died for this: And,

(2.) *To purify to himself a peculiar people*. This enforces the second lesson: *To live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. Christ died to purify, as well as to pardon; to obtain grace, to heal the nature, as well as to free from guilt and condemnation. He gave himself for his church to cleanse it. Thus does he make to himself a peculiar people by purifying of them. Thus are they distinguished from the world, that lies in wickedness; they are born of God, and assimilated to him, bear his image, are holy as the heavenly Father is holy. Observe, Redemption from sin and sanctification of the nature go together, and both make a peculiar people unto God: Freedom from guilt and condemnation, and from the power of lusts, and purification of soul by the Spirit. These are a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and so a peculiar people*. And,

(3.) *Zealous of good works*. This peculiar people, as they are made so by grace purifying them; so must they be seen to be so, by doing good and a zeal therein. Observe, The gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but of holiness and good life: We are redeemed from our vain conversation, to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. See we!

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then that we do good, and have zeal in it; only looking that zeal be guided by knowledge and spirited with love, directed to the glory of God and always in some good thing. And thus of the motive to the duties directed, from the end of Christ's death. Then,

(4.) The apostle closeth the chapter, as he began it, with a summary direction to Titus upon the whole.

15. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Here is the matter and manner of ministers teaching, and a special instruction to Titus in reference to himself.

[1.] The matter of ministers teaching: *These things*, viz. the before-mentioned: Not Jewish fables and traditions; but the truths and duties of the gospel, of avoiding sin, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Observe, Ministers in their preaching must keep close to the word of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*, and not the figments and inventions of his own brain.

[2.] The manner, viz. by doctrine, and exhortation, and reproof with all authority, 2 Tim. iii. 16. *All scriptures are given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, i. e. to teach sound doctrine, to convince of sin, and refute error, to reform the life, and to carry forward in what is just and good, that the man of God, Christian or minister, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works*, viz. that are to be practised by himself, or to be taught others. Here is what will furnish for all parts of his duty, and the right discharge of them. *These things speak*, or teach; shun not to declare the whole counsel of God. The great and necessary truths and duties of the gospel, especially, these speak and exhort *μεγαλὰν, press with much earnestness*. Ministers must not be cold and lifeless in delivering heavenly doctrine and precepts, as if they were indifferent things or of little concern; but they must urge them with earnestness suitable to their nature and importance; they must call upon persons to mind and heed, and not be hearers only, deceiving themselves; but doers of the word, that they may be blessed therein. And rebuke, convince and reprove such as contradict or gainsay, or neglect and receive not the truth as they should, or retain it in unrighteousness; those who hear it not with such a believing and obedient mind and heart as they ought; but instead of that, it may be, live in contrary practices, shewing themselves stubborn and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. Rebuke with all authority, as coming in the name of God, and armed with his threatenings and discipline, which whoever make light of, at their peril it will be. Ministers are reprovers in the gate.

[3.] Here is a special instruction to Titus in reference to himself: *Let no man despise thee*, i. e. gave no occasion to do so, nor suffer it without reproof, considering he that despiseth, despiseth not man but God. Or, thus speak and exhort these things; press them upon all, as they may respectively be concerned; with boldness and faithfulness reprove sin; and carefully look to thyself and thy own carriage, and then none will despise thee. The most effectual way for ministers to secure themselves from contempt, is to keep close to the doctrine of Christ, and imitate his example; to preach and live well, and do their duty with prudence and courage; this will best preserve both their reputation and comfort.

Perhaps too an admonition might be here intended to the people; that Titus, though young, and but a substitute of the apostle, yet should not be contemned by them; but considered and respected as a faithful minister of Christ, and encouraged and supported in his work and office, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. *Know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake*. Mind their teaching, respect their persons, support them in their function, and what in you lies further their endeavours for the honour of God and the salvation of souls.

C H A P. III.

Of duties which concerns Christians more in common, and the reasons of them, ver. 1—8. What Titus in teaching should avoid, and how he should deal with an heretic, with some other directions, ver. 9—14. And salutations in the close, ver. 15.

1. PUT them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2. To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

4. Here is the fourth thing in the matter of the epistle. The apostle had directed Titus in reference to the particular and special duties of several sorts of persons; now he bids him exhort to what concerned them more in common, viz. to quietness and submission to rulers, and readiness to do good, and to equitable and gentle behaviour towards all men: Things comely and ornamental of religion; he must therefore put them in mind of such things. Ministers are peoples remembrancers of their duty. As they are remembrancers for the people to God in prayers, Isa. lxii. 6. so are they from God to them in preaching, 2 Pet. i. 12. *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance*. Forgetfulness of duty is a common frailty; there is need, therefore, of minding and quickening them thereto. Here are the duties themselves and the reasons of them.

(1.) The duties themselves, which they were to be minded of.

[1.] *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates*. Magistracy is God's ordinance for the good of all, and therefore must be regarded and submitted to by all; nor for wrath and by force only, but willingly and for conscience sake. *Principalities, and powers and magistrates*, i. e. all civil rulers, whether supreme and chief, or subordinate in the government under which they live, of whatever form it be, that they be subject to them and obey them, viz. in things lawful and honest, and that belong to their office to require. The Christian religion was misrepresented by its adversaries, as prejudicial to the rights of princes and civil powers, and tending to faction and sedition, and to rebellion against lawful authority; therefore to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and stop the mouths of malicious enemies, Christians must be minded to shew themselves examples rather of all due subjection and obedience to the government that is over them. Natural desire of liberty must be guided and bounded by reason and scripture. Spiritual privileges do not make void or weaken, but confirm and strengthen their obligations to civil duties: Mind them therefore to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates. And,

[2.] *To be ready to every good work*. Some refer this to such good works

as are required by magistrates, and within their sphere; whatever tends to good order, and to promote and secure public tranquillity and peace, be not backward but ready to promote such things. But though this be included, if not first intended, yet is it not to be hereto restrained: It respects doing good in all kinds, and on every occasion that may offer, whether respecting God, ourselves, or our neighbour; what may bring credit to religion in the world. *Whatever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on those things*, Phil. iv. 8. viz. to do and follow and further them. Mere harmlessness, or good words and good meanings only, are not enough without good works. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and keep unspotted from the world*: Not only take, but seek occasion for doing good, keep fitness and readiness that way, put it not off others, but embrace and hold on it thyself, delight and rejoice therein, put all in mind of this. And,

[3.] *To speak evil of no man*: *μηδὲν βλασφημεῖν*, to revile, or curse, or blaspheme none: or (as our translation more generally) *to speak evil of none*, unjustly and falsely or unnecessarily, without call, and when it may do hurt but no good to the person himself or any other. If no good can be spoken, rather than speak evil unnecessarily, say nothing. We must never take pleasure in speaking ill of others, or make the worst of any thing, but the best that we can. We must not go up and down as tale-bearers, carrying ill-natured stories, to the prejudice of our neighbour's good name, and destruction of brotherly love. Misrepresentations or ill-insinuations of bad intent, or of hypocrisy in what is done, things out of our reach or cognisance, these come within the reach of this prohibition. An evil this is, as too common, so of great malignity. *Jam. i. 26. If any man seemeth to be righteous and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain*: Such loose uncharitable talk is displeasing to God, and hurtful among men, *Prov. xvii. 9. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love, viz. to himself by this tenderness and charity; or rather to the transgressor; but he that repeateth a matter, who blazes and tells the faults of another abroad, separateth very friends; he raiseth dissensions, and alienates his friend from himself, and perhaps from others: This is among the sins to be put off, Eph. iv. 31. or if indulged, unfit for Christian communion here and the society of the blessed in heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 10.* Mind them therefore to avoid this. And,

[4.] *To be no brawlers, ἀμάχητος ὢν*, no fighters either with hand or tongue, i. e. no quarrelsome contentious persons, apt to give or return ill and provoking language. An holy contending there is for matters good and important, and in a manner suitable and becoming, not with wrath or injurious violence. Christians must follow the things that make for peace, and that in a peaceful not a rough and boisterous and hurtful way, but as becomes the servants of the God of peace and love. *Rom. xii. 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; this is the Christian's wisdom and duty. The glory of man is to pass over a transgression; of a reasonable, and therefore to be sure of a Christian man, whose reason is improved and advanced by religion; such may not, will not presently fall on one that hath offended him; but like God will be slow to anger, and ready to forgive.* Contention and strife arise from mens' lusts, and exorbitant unruly passions, which must be curbed and moderated, not indulged; and Christians need to be minded of these things, that they do not by a wrathful contentious spirit and carriage displease and dishonour God and discredit religion, promoting feuds in the places where they live. *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* Wherefore it follows,

[5.] *But gentle: ἡμῶν ἐκτετακτοῦ* and just, or candid and fair in constructions of things, not taking words or actions in the worst sense; and for peace sometimes yielding somewhat of strict right. And,

[6.] *Shewing all meekness to all men.* We must be of a mild disposition, and not only have meekness in our hearts, but shew it in our speech and carriage. *All meekness*, i. e. meekness in all instances and occasions not towards friends only, but to all men, though still with wisdom, as James admonishes, *chap. iii. 13. distinguish the person and the sin, pity the one and hate the other; and of sin and sin, look not on all alike, there are motives and beams; and of sinner and sinner, of some have compassion, others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, thus making a difference*, Jude 22, 23. Mind these things, the wisdom that is from above is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated. Meekness of spirit and carriage renders religion amiable; it is a commanded imitation of Christ the grand exemplar, and what brings its own reward with it, in the ease and comfort of the disposition itself and the blessings accompanying it. These shall be glad and rejoice, shall be taught and guided in their way, and satisfied with bread, and beautified with salvation. Thus of the duties themselves, which Titus was to put people in mind of: for which,

(2.) He adds the reasons,

[1.] From their own past condition, which he next describes.

3. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hatred, and hating one another.

Observe, Consideration of mens' natural condition is a great means and ground of equity and gentleness, and all meekness towards those who are yet in such a state: This hath aptness to abate pride, and work pity and hope in reference to those who are yet unconverted; we ourselves also were so and so corrupt and sinful, therefore we should not be impatient and bitter, hard and severe toward those who are but as ourselves once were. Would we then have been condemned, and proudly and rigorously dealt with? No, but would have been treated with gentleness and humanity, and therefore should we now so treat those who are unconverted, according to that rule of equity; *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne faceris*; what you would not have done to you, that do not you to another. Their past natural condition is set forth in divers particulars. *We ourselves also were sometimes.*

(1.) *Foolish*, without true spiritual understanding and knowledge, ignorant of heavenly things. Observe, They should be most disposed to bear with others follies, who may remember many of their own; they should be meek and gentle, and patient toward them, who once needed and doubtless then expected the same. *We ourselves also were sometimes foolish.*

(2.) *Disobedient*, heady and unperusable, resisting the word, and rebellious, even against the natural laws of God, and those which human society requires. Well are these set together, *foolish and disobedient*. For what folly like this, to disobey God and his laws, natural or revealed? This is contrary to right reason, and mens true and greatest interests; and what so foolish as to violate and go counter to these?

(3.) *Deceived*, or wandering, viz. out of the ways of truth and holiness. Man in this his degenerate state is of a straying nature, thence compared to a lost sheep; this must be sought and brought back, and guided in the

right way, *Psal. cxix. 176.* He is weak and ready to be imposed upon by the wiles and subtilties of Satan, and of men lying in wait to seduce and mislead.

(4.) *Serving divers lusts and pleasures*, viz. as vassals and slaves under them. 1. Observe, Men deceived are easily entangled and ensnared; they would not otherwise serve divers lusts and pleasures as they do, were they not blinded and beguiled into it. See here too what a different notion the word gives of a sensual and fleshly life from what the world generally hath of it. Carnal people think they enjoy their pleasures; the word calls it fornication and vassalage, they are very drudges and bond slaves under them; so far are they from freedom and felicity in them, that they are captivated by them, and serve them as task-masters and tyrants. 2. Observe, It is the misery of the servants of sin, that they have many masters: One lust hurrying them one way and another another; pride commands one thing, covetousness another, and often a contrary. What vile slaves are sinners, while they conceit themselves free? The lusts that tempt them promise them liberty, but in yielding they become the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.

(5.) *Living in malice*, one of those lusts that bear rule in them. Malice desires hurt to another and rejoices in it.

(6.) *And envy*, which grudges and repines at another's good, frets at his prosperity and success in any thing: Both roots of bitterness whence many evils spring; evil thoughts and speeches, tongues set on fire of hell, detracting from and impairing the just and due praises of others. *Their words are swords*, wherewith they slay the good name and honour of their neighbour; the sin of Satan, and of Cain who was of that evil one and slew his brother: And wherefore slew he him, but of this envy and malice? *Because his own works are evil and his brother's righteous.* These were some of the sins in which we lived in our natural state. And,

(7.) *Hateful*, or odious, deserving to be hated.

(8.) *And hating one another.* Observe, those that are sinful, i. e. living and allowing themselves in sin, are hateful to God and all good men. Their temper and ways are so, though not simply their persons: And it is the misery of sinners that they hate one another, as it is the duty and happiness of saints to love another. What contentions and quarrels flow from mens' corruptions? Such as were in the nature of those that by conversion are now good, but in their unconverted state made them ready to run like furious wild beasts one upon another. The consideration of its having been thus with us should moderate our spirits, and dispose us to be more equal and gentle, meek and tender-hearted toward those who are such. This is the argument from their own past condition here described. And he reasons,

[2.] From their present state. We are delivered out of that our miserable condition, by no merit or strength of our own; but only by the mercy and free grace of God, and merit of Christ, and operation of his Spirit: Therefore have no ground, in respect of ourselves, to condemn those who are yet unconverted, but rather to pity them and cherish hope concerning them, that they, though in themselves as unworthy and unwelcome as we were, yet may obtain mercy as we have: and so upon this occasion the apostle again opens the causes of our salvation, ver. 4—7.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6. Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: 7. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

(1.) We have here the prime author of our salvation, viz. God the Father, therefore termed here *God our Saviour*, 2 Cor. v. 18. *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*. All things belonging to the new creation, and recovery of fallen man to life and happiness, of which he is there speaking, all these things are of God the Father, as contriver and beginner of this work. There is an order in acting, as in subsisting; the Father begins, the Son manages, and the holy Spirit works and perfects all. God, viz. the Father, is a Saviour by Christ, through the Spirit, *John iii. 16. God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* He is the Father of Christ, and through him the Father of mercies; all spiritual blessings are by Christ from him, *Eph. i. 3. We joy in God through Jesus Christ*. *Rom. v. 11. And with one mind, and with one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(2.) The spring and rise of it. The divine philanthropy, or kindness and love of God to man. By grace we are saved from first to last; this is the ground and motive; God's pity and mercy to man in misery was the first wheel, or rather the Spirit in the wheels, that sets and keeps them all in motion. God is not, cannot be moved by any thing out of himself; the occasion is in man, viz. his misery and wretchedness: But sin, bringing that misery, wrath might have issued out rather than compassion; but God knowing how to adjust all with his own honour and perfections, would pity and save rather than destroy: He delights in mercy; *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* We read of *riches, of goodness, and of mercy*, *Rom. ii. 4. Ephes. ii. 7.* Acknowledge we this, and give him the glory of it, not turning it to wantonness, but to thankfulness and obedience.

(3.) Here is the means or instrumental cause, viz. The shining out of this love and grace of God in the gospel, after it appeared, viz. in the word. Love and grace appearing hath, through the Spirit, great virtue to soften and change and turn to God, and so is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. Thus having asserted God to be the author, his free grace the spring, and the manifestation of this in the gospel the means of salvation; that the honour of all still may be the better secured to him.

(4.) False grounds and motives are here removed: *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*; not for foreseen works of ours, but his own free grace and mercy alone. Works must be in the saved (where is room for it) but not among the causes of his salvation; they are the way to the kingdom, not the meriting price of it; all is upon the foot of undeserved favour of mercy from first to last. Election is of grace, we are chosen to be holy, not because antecedently seen we would be so, *Eph. i. 4.* It is the fruit, not the cause of election. 2 *Theff. ii. 13. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.* So effectual calling, in which election breaks out and is first seen. 2 *Tim. i. 9. He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. We are justified freely by grace*, *Rom. iii. 24.* and sanctified and saved by grace, *Eph. ii. 8. By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it*

is the gift of God. Faith and all saving graces are God's free gift and works; the beginning, and increase, and perfection of them in glory, all is from this. In building men up to be an holy temple unto God, from the foundation to the top-stone, we must cry nothing but *grace, grace* unto it. It is *not of works, lest any man should boast; but of grace, that he who glorieth should glory only in the Lord.* Thus the true cause is shewn, and the false removed.

(5.) Here is the formal cause of salvation, or that wherein it lies, the beginnings of it at least, in *regeneration* or *spiritual renewing*, as it is here called. *Old things pass away, and all things, become new, viz.* in a moral and spiritual, not in a physical and natural sense: It is the same man, but with other dispositions and habits; evil ones are done away, as to the prevalence of them at present, and all remains of them in due time will be so, viz. when the work shall be perfected in heaven. A new prevailing principle of grace and holiness is wrought, which inclines and sways and governs, and makes the man a *new man*, a *new creature*; new thoughts, desires, and affections, a new and holy turn of life and actions; the life of God in man, not only from God in a special manner, but conformed and tending to him. Here is salvation begun, and which will be growing and increasing to perfection; therefore it is said, *he saved us.* What is so begun, as sure to be perfected in time, is expressed as if it already were so. Look we to this therefore without delay, we must be initially saved now, by regeneration, if on good ground we would expect complete salvation in heaven; the change then will be but in degree, not in kind; grace is glory begun, as glory is but grace in its perfection. How few mind this? Most carry it as if they were afraid to be happy before the time; they would have heaven they pretend at last, yet care not for holiness now, i. e. they would have the end without the beginning; so absurd are sinners: But without regeneration, that is the first resurrection, no attaining the second glorious one, the resurrection of the just. Here then is formal salvation, in the new divine life wrought by the gospel.

(6.) Here is the outward sign and seal thereof in baptism, called therefore *the washing of regeneration*. The work itself is inward and spiritual; but this is outwardly signified and sealed in this ordinance. Water is of a cleansing and purifying nature, does away the filth of the flesh, and so was apt to signify the doing away the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ; though that aptness alone without Christ's institution had not been sufficient: This it is that makes it of this signification on God's part, a seal of righteousness by faith, as circumcision was, in the place of which it succeeds; and on ours an engagement to be the Lord's. Thus baptism saves figuratively, and sacramentally where it is rightly used, Acts xii. 16. *Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.* So Ephel. v. 26. *That he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water by the word.* Slight not this outward sign and seal, where it may be had according to Christ's appointment; yet rest not in the outward washing only, but look to the *answer of a good conscience*, without which the external washing will avail nothing. The covenant sealed in baptism binds to duties, as well as exhibits and conveys benefits and privileges; if the former be not minded, in vain are the latter expected. Sever not what God has joined, on both the outer and inner part is baptism complete; as he that was circumcised became debtor to the whole law, Gal. v. 3. so is he that is baptized to the gospel, to observe all the commands and ordinances thereof, as Christ appointed. Matt. xxviii. 19. *Disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*

This is the outward sign and seal of salvation, baptism, called here *the washing of regeneration*.

(7.) Here is the principal efficient, viz. The Spirit of God, it is the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*; not excluding the Father and the Son, who in all works without themselves are concurring; nor the use of means, viz. the word and sacraments, by which the Spirit works; through his operation it is that they have their saving effect. In the economy of our salvation the applying and effecting part is especially attributed to the *holy Spirit*. We are said to be *born of the Spirit*; to be *quickened and sanctified by the Spirit*; to be *led and guided, strengthened and helped by the Spirit*. Through him we mortify sin, perform duty, walk in God's way; all the acts and operations of the divine life in us, the works and fruits of righteousness without us, all are through this blessed and holy Spirit, who is therefore called *the Spirit of life, and of grace and holiness*; all grace is from him. Earnestly therefore is he to be sought, and greatly to be heeded by us, that we quench not his holy motions, nor resist and oppose him in his workings. *Res delicta est Spiritus*, the Spirit is a tender thing; as we carry toward him, so may we expect he will to us; if we slight and resist and oppose his workings, he will slack them; if we continue to vex him, he will retire: *Grieve not therefore the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption*, Eph. iv. 30. The Spirit seals by his renewing and sanctifying, his witnessing and assuring work; he distinguishes and marks out for salvation, fits for it, it is his work: We could not turn to God by any strength of our own, any more than we can be justified by any righteousness of our own.

(8.) Here is the manner of God's communicating this Spirit in the gifts and graces of it; not with a scanty and niggardly hand, but most freely and plentifully: *Which he shed on us abundantly.* More of the Spirit in its gifts and graces is poured out under the gospel than was under the law; whence it is eminently styled *the ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. A measure of the Spirit the church hath had in all ages, but more in gospel times, since the coming of Christ, than before; *the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ*, i. e. a more plentiful effusion of grace, fulfilling the promises and prophecies of old, Isa. xlv. 3. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*: this greatest and best of blessings, an effusion of grace, and of the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit. Joel ii. 28. *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh*; not on Jews only, but Gentiles also. This was to be in gospel times, and accordingly. Acts ii. 17, 18, 33. *Speaking of Christ risen and ascended, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth* (saith Peter) *this, that ye now see and hear*: and chap. x. 44, 45. *The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*, viz. Gentiles as well as Jews. Miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost indeed those were in great measure, but not without the sanctifying graces of it also accompanying many if not all of them. There was then great abundance of common gifts of illumination, outward calling and profession, and general faith, and of more special gifts of sanctification too, such as faith, and hope, and love, and other graces of the Spirit. Get we a share in these. What will it signify if much be shed forth and we remain dry? Our condemnation will but be aggravated the more, if under such a dispensation of grace we remain void of grace: *Be filled with the Spirit*, saith the apostle; it is duty as well as privilege, because of the means which God in the gospel is ready to bless and make effectual; this is the manner of God's communicating grace and all spiritual blessings under the gospel, *plentifully*; he is not straitened towards us, but we towards him and in ourselves.

(9.) Here is the procuring cause of all, namely, Christ: *Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* He it is who purchased the Spirit and his saving gifts and graces; all come through him, and through him as a Saviour, whose undertaking and work it is to bring to grace and glory; he is our righteousness and peace, and our head, from whom we have all spiritual life and influences: *He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* Praise we God for him above all, go we to the Father by him, improve him to all sanctifying and saving purposes. Have we grace? Thank him with the Father and Spirit for it: *Account all things but loss dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him*, and grow and increase therein more and more.

(10.) Here are the ends why we are brought into this new spiritual condition, namely, justification, and heirship, and hope of eternal life: *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* Justification in the gospel sense is the free remission of a sinner, and accepting him as righteous through the righteousness of Christ received by faith. In it there is removing guilt that bound to punishment, and accepting and dealing with the person as one that now is righteous in God's sight. This God does freely as to us, yet through the intervention of Christ's sacrifice and righteousness laid hold on by faith. Rom. iii. 20, &c. *By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified*; but through the *righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe*: whence, ver. 24. we are said to be *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* God, in justifying a sinner in the way of the gospel, is gracious to him, and yet just to himself and his law; forgiveness being through a perfect righteousness and satisfaction made to justice by Christ, who is the propitiation for sin, and not merited by the sinner himself. So it is here, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* It is by grace, as the spring and rise, (as was said,) though through the redemption that is in Christ, as making the way, God's law and justice being thereby satisfied; and by faith applying that redemption. Acts xiii. 39. *By him (i. e. by Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.* Whence the apostle desires to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Trust we not therefore in our own righteousness or merit of good works, but to Christ's righteousness alone, received by faith for justification and acceptance with God. Inherent righteousness we must have, and the fruits of it in works of obedience; but not as our justifying righteousness before God, but as fruits of our justification, and evidences of our interest in Christ, and qualifications for life and happiness, and the very beginning and part of it; but the procuring of all this is by Christ, that *being justified by his grace we should be made heirs.* Observe, Our justification is *by the grace of God*, and our justification by that grace is necessary, in order to our being made heirs of eternal life; without such justification no adoption and heirship, and so no right of inheritance. John i. 12. *Whoever received him (namely Christ) to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* Eternal life is set before us in the promise, the Spirit works faith in us and hope of that life, and so are we made heirs of it, and have a kind of possession of it even now; faith and hope bring it near, and fill with joy in the well-grounded expectation of it. The meanest believer is a great heir; though he have not his portion in hand, he has good hope through grace, and may bear up under all difficulties; there is a better state in view, he is waiting for an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.* How well may such comfort themselves with these words? And now all this gives good reason why we should *show all meekness to all men*, because we have experienced so much benefit by the kindness and love of God to us, and may hope that they, in God's time, may be partakers of the like grace as we are. And thus of the reasons of equal and gentle, meek and tender carriage towards others; from their own bad condition in time past, and the present more happy state into which they are brought, without any merit or deserving of their own, and whereinto by the same grace others may be brought also.

[3.] The apostle having opened the duties of Christians in common, with the reasons respecting themselves, adds another from their goodness and usefulness to men.

8. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.*

1. Observe, When he hath opened the grace of God towards us, he immediately presseth the necessity of good works; for we must not expect the benefit of God's mercy, unless we make conscience of our duty. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly*; i. e. this is true Christian doctrine of highest importance, and which ministers must most earnestly and constantly press and inculcate; that they which have believed in God do not think that a bare naked faith will save them; but it must be an operative, working faith, bringing forth the fruit of righteousness; they must make it their care to *maintain good works*, not to do them occasionally only, and when opportunities come in their way, but to seek opportunities for doing them. *These things are good and profitable unto men*: these good works, say some, or the teaching of these things, rather than idle questions, as follows. These things are good in themselves, and the teaching of them useful to mankind, making persons a common good in their places. 2. Observe, Ministers in teaching must see that they deliver what is sound and good in itself, and profitable to them that hear: all must be to the use of edifying both of persons and societies.

5. Here is the fifth and last thing in the matter of the epistle: what Titus should avoid in teaching; how he should deal with an heretic: with some other directions.

9. *But avoid evil questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain.*

(1.) That the apostle's meaning here might be more clear and full, and especially fitted to the time and state of things there, and the many Judaizers among them, he tells Titus what in teaching he should shun. There are needful questions to be discussed and cleared, such as make for improvement in useful knowledge; but idle and foolish inquiries, tending neither to God's glory or the edification of men, these must be shunned. Some may have a shew of wisdom, but are vain, as many among the Jewish doctors,

doctors, as well as of later schoolmen, who abound with questions of no moment or use to faith or practice; avoid these. *And genealogies* of the gods, say some, that the heathen poets made such noise about; or rather those that the Jews were so curious in; some lawful and useful inquiries might be made into these things, to see the fulfilling of the scriptures in some cases, and especially in the descent of Christ the Messiah; but all that served to pomp only, and feed vanity, in boasting of a long pedigree, and much more such as the Jewish teachers were ready to busy themselves in and trouble their hearers with, even since Christ was come, and that distinction of families and tribes had been taken away, as if they would build again that polity that is now abolished; these Titus must withstand us foolish and vain. *And contentions and strivings about the law.* There were those that were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, and would have them continued in the church; though by the gospel and coming of Christ they were superfluous and done away. Titus must give no countenance to these, but avoid and oppose them. *For they are unprofitable and vain:* This is to be referred to all those *foolish questions and genealogies*, as well as those *strivings about the law.* They are so far from instructing and building up in godliness, that they are hindrances of it rather: Christian religion and good works, which are to be maintained, will hereby be weakened and prejudiced; the peace of the church disturbed, and progress of the gospel staid. Observe, Ministers must not only teach things good and useful, but shun and oppose the contrary, what would corrupt the faith, and hinder godliness and good works; nor should people have itching ears, but love and embrace sound doctrine which tends most to the use of edifying.

(2.) But because after all there will be *heresies and heretics* in the church, the apostle next directs Titus what to do in such a case and how to deal with such.

10. A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: 11. Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

He that forsakes the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and branches false doctrines, and propagates them to the corrupting of the faith in weighty and momentous points, and breaks the peace of the church about them, let such an one be rejected, after due means used to reclaim him. Admonish him once and again, that if possible he may be brought back and thou mayest gain thy brother; but if that will not reduce him, that others be not hurt, cast him out of the communion, and warn all Christians to avoid him. *Knowing that he that is such is subverted*, i. e. turned off from the foundation, and sinneth grievously, being *self-condemned*. Those that will not be reclaimed by admonitions, but are obstinate in their sins and errors, are *subverted and self-condemned*; they inflict that punishment upon themselves that the governors of the church should inflict upon them: i. e. they throw themselves out of the church, and throw off its communion, and so are self-condemned. 1. Observe, How great an evil proper heresy is, not lightly therefore to be charged upon any, though greatly to be taken heed of by all. Such an one is *subverted* or perverted, a metaphor from a building so ruined as it is hard, if possible, to repair and raise it up again. Proper heretics have seldom been recovered to the true faith: not so much defect of judgment, as perverseness of the will being in the case, through pride, or ambition, or self-willfulness, or covetousness, or such like corruption, which therefore must be taken heed of; be humble, love the truth and practise it, and damning heresy will be escaped. 2. Observe, Pains and patience must be used about those that err most grievously. They are not easily and soon to be given up and cast off, but competent time and means must be tried for their recovery. 3. Observe, The church's means even with *heretics* are persuasive and rational. They must be admonished, instructed and warned, so much *restitutio* does import. 4. Observe, Upon continued obstinacy and irreclaimableness, the church hath power, and is obliged to preserve its own purity, by severing such a corrupt member, which discipline may too by God's blessing become effectual to reform the offender, or leave him the more inexcusable in his condemnation.

(3.) The apostle subjoins some further directions.

12. When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. 13. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Here are two personal things enjoined, viz.

[1.] That Titus should hold himself ready to come to Paul at Nicopolis, a city of Thrace, as is reckoned, on the borders of Macedonia. So soon

as Artemas or Tychicus should be sent to Crete to supply his place, and take care of the churches there when he should leave them. The apostle would not have them in their young and weak state to be without one or other of chief-sufficiency, to guide and help them. Titus, it seems, was not their ordinary fixed bishop or pastor, but an evangelist, otherwise Paul would not have called him so much from his charge. Of Artemas we read little, but Tychicus is mentioned on many occasions with respect. Paul calls him *a beloved brother*, and *faithful minister*, and *fellow-servant in the Lord*: one fit therefore for the service intimated. When Paul saith to Titus, *Be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter*, it is plain the epistle was not written from Nicopolis, as the postscript would have it; for then he would have said, I determined *here*, not there, to winter.

[2.] The other personal charge to Titus is, that he would bring two of his friends on their journey diligently, and see them furnished, so that *nothing should be wanting to them*: This was to be done not as a piece of common civility only, but of Christian piety, out of respect both to them and the work they were sent about, which probably was to preach the gospel, or to be some way serviceable to the churches. Zenas is styled *the lawyer*, whether in reference to the Roman or the Mosaic law, as having some time been his profession is doubtful: Apollos was an eminent and faithful minister: accompanying such part of their way, and accommodating them for their work and journey, was a pious and needful service. And to further this, and lay in for it, what the apostle had before bid Titus teach, *ver. 8.* he repeats here.

14. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

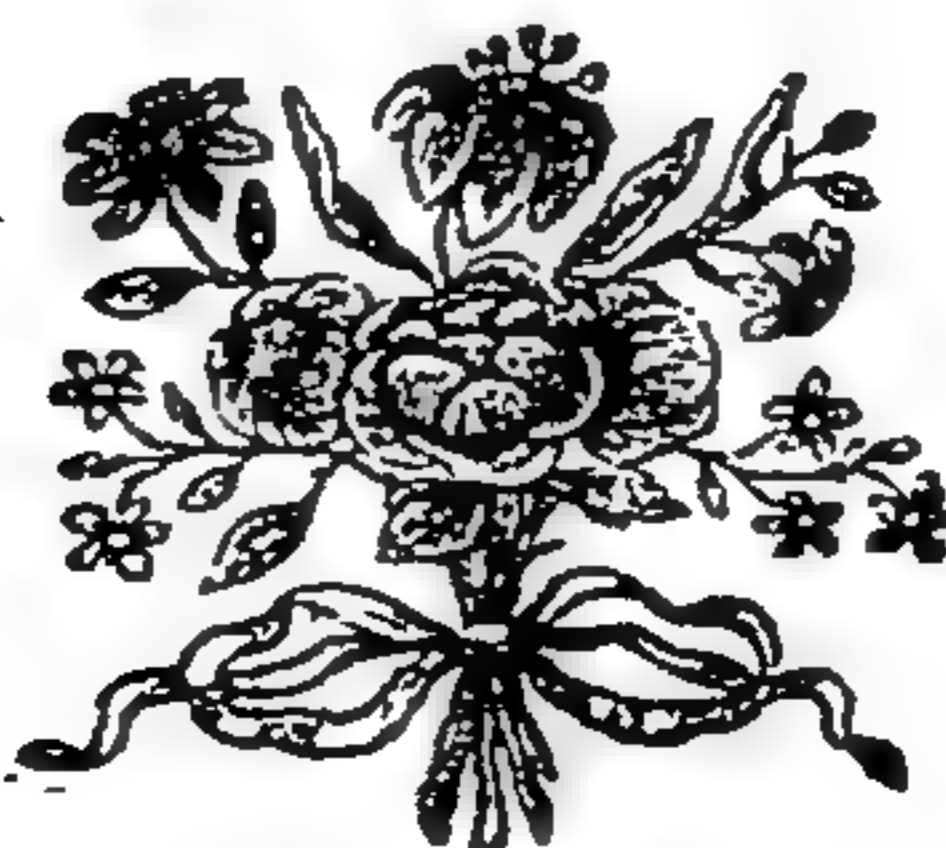
Let Christians, those that have believed in God, learn to maintain good works, especially such as these, supporting ministers in their work of preaching and spreading the gospel, hereby becoming *fellow-helpers to the truth*, 3d Epistle of John, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* *That they be not unfruitful.* Christianity is not a fruitless profession; the professors of it must be *filled with the fruits of righteousness*, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. It is not enough that they be harmless, but they must be profitable, doing good, as well as eschewing evil. *Let ours set up and maintain some honest labour and employment*, to provide for themselves and their families, that they be not unprofitable burdens on the earth, so some understand it. Let them not think that Christianity gives them a writ of ease; no, it lays an obligation upon them to seek some honest work and calling, and therein to abide with God. This is of good report, will credit religion, and be good to mankind, they will not be unprofitable members of the body, or burdensome and chargeable to others, but enable to be helpful to those in want. *To maintain good works for necessary uses*, not living like drones on the labours of others, but themselves fruitful to the common benefit.

III. The apostle concludes with salutations and benedictions.

15. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Though perhaps not personally known, some of them at least, yet all by Paul testify their love and good wishes to Titus, owning him thereby in his work and heartening him to go on therein. Great comfort and encouragement it is to have the heart and prayers of other Christians with and for us. *Greet them that love us in the faith*, or *for the faith*, i. e. who are our loving fellow Christians; holiness or the image of God in any, is the great endearing thing, what gives strength to all other bonds, and is itself the best. *Grace be with you all. Amen.* This is the closing benediction, not to Titus alone, but to all the faithful with him: which shews, though the epistle bears the single name of Titus in the inscription; yet it was for the use of the churches there, and they were in the eye and upon the heart of the apostle in the writing of it. *Grace be with you all*, i. e. the love and favour with God, with the fruits and effects thereof, according to need; spiritual ones, especially, and the increase and feeling of them more and more in their souls. This is the apostle's wish and prayer, shewing his affection to them, and his desire of their good, and a means of obtaining for them, and bringing down upon them the thing requested. Observe, Grace is the chief thing to be wished and begged for, with respect to ourselves or others; it is summarily all good. *Amen* shuts up the prayer, expressing desire and hope, that so it may be, and so it shall be.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.



AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
 WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
 OF THE EPISTLE OF
St. PAUL to PHILEMON.

THIS epistle to Philemon is placed the last of those with the name of Paul to them, perhaps because the shortest, and of an argument peculiar and different from all the others; yet such as the Spirit of God, which indited it, saw would, in its kind, be very instructive and useful in the churches. The occasion of it was this: Philemon, one of note, and probably a minister in the church of Coloss, a city of Phrygia, had a servant named Onesimus, who having purloined his goods, ran away from him, and in his rambles came to Rome, where Paul was then a prisoner for the gospel, and providentially coming under his preaching there, was by the blessing of God converted by him; after which he ministered awhile to the apostle in bonds, and might have been further useful to him, but understanding him to be another man's servant, he would not, without his consent, detain him, but sends him back with this letter commendatory, wherein he earnestly sues for his pardon and kind reception.

Before we enter on the Exposition, such general things as follow may be taken notice of from the Epistle, and what relates to it, namely,

1. **T**HE goodness and mercy of God to a poor wandering sinner, bringing him by his gracious providence under the means, and making them effectual to his conversion. Thus came he to be sought of him that asked not for him, and to be found of him that sought him not, Isa lxxv. 1

2. The great and endeared affection between a true convert, and him whom God used to be the instrument of his conversion. Paul regards this poor fugitive now as *his son in the faith*, and terms him *his own bowels*; and Onesimus readily serves Paul in prison, and would gladly have continued to do so, would duty have permitted; but being another's servant, he must return and submit himself to his master, and be at his dispose.

3. The tender and good spirit of this blessed apostle Paul. With what earnestness does he concern himself for the poor slave? being now through his preaching reconciled to God, he labours for reconciliation between him and his master. How pathetic a letter does he here write in his behalf? Scarce any argument forgotten that could possibly be used in the case, and all pressed with such force, that had it been the greatest favour to himself that he was asking, he could not have used more

4. The remarkable providence of God in preserving such a short writing as this, that might be thought of little concern to the church, being not only a letter to a particular person, as those to Timothy and Titus, and Gaius, and the elect lady likewise were; but of a private personal matter, namely, the receiving of a poor fugitive servant into the favour and family of his injured master. What in this is here that concerns the common salvation? And yet over this hath there been a special divine care, it being given as the other scriptures were, by *inspiration of God*, and, in some sort, as they are *profitable for doctrine and for reproof, and for correction and for instruction in righteousness*. God

would have extant a proof and instance of his rich and free grace for the encouragement and comfort of the meanest and vilest of sinners, looking to him for mercy and forgiveness; and instruction to ministers and others not to despise any, much less to judge them as to their final state, as if they were utter cast-aways; but rather to attempt their conversion, hoping they may be saved; likewise how to carry toward them, and how they should carry. Joy must be on earth, as well as there is in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth; they must now be loved and helped and confirmed in good, and further in it; and in their outward concerns, their comfort and welfare must be consulted and promoted what in us lies. And on their part, they must be humble and grateful, acknowledging God and his instruments in what good they have received, ready to all suitable returns, making what reparation they can in case of injuries, and living a life of thankfulness and obedience. To such purposes may this epistle have been written and preserved. And perhaps,

5. There may be something further in all this; at least, by way of allusion, it is applicable to the mediation and intercession of Christ for poor sinners. We, like Onesimus, were revolters from God's service, and had injured him in his rights; Jesus Christ finds us, and by his grace works a change in us, and then intercedes for us with the Father, that we may be received into his favour and family again, and past offences may be forgiven: and we are sure the *Father heareth him always*. There is no reason to doubt but Paul prevailed with Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus; and more reason have we to be confident that the intercession of Christ with the Father is prevalent for the acceptance of all whose case he takes in hand and recommends to him. From these general observations come we to the epistle itself.

In this epistle we have the preface, ver. 1—7. The substance and body of it, ver. 8—21. And then the conclusion, ver. 22. to the end.

1. **P**AUL a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow-labourer, 2. And to our beloved Apphia, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in thy house:

1. In these two first verses of the *preface* are the persons from and to whom it is written, with some annexed note or title implying somewhat of argument to the purpose of the letter.

1. *The persons writing*: Paul, the principal, who calls himself a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*, i. e. for Jesus Christ. A prisoner simply is no comfort or honour, but such as Paul was *for the faith and preaching of the gospel*, this was true glory, and proper to move Philemon, upon the request made to him by such an one. A petition from one suffering for Christ and his gospel sure would be tenderly regarded by a believer and minister of Christ, and especially when strengthened too with the concurrence of Timothy, one eminent in the church, sometimes called by Paul *his son in the faith*, but now it is likely grown more in years, he styles him *his brother*. What could be denied to two such petitioners? Paul is not slight in serving a poor convert, he gets all the additional help he could in it.

2. *The persons written to* are *Philemon and Apphia*, and with them Archippus and the church in Philemon's house. Philemon the master of Onesimus, was the principal to whom the letter is inscribed; the *head* of

the family, in whom was the authority and power of taking in or shutting out, and whose property Onesimus was; with him therefore chiefly lay the business. *To Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow-labourer*; a good man he was, and probably a minister, and on both accounts dearly beloved by Paul. *A lover of good men* is one property of a good minister, Tit. i. 8. and specially must first love those that *labour with them in the work of the gospel*, and who are faithful therein. The general calling as *Christians* knits those together who are Christians; but when conjunction in the *special calling as ministers* is added, this will be a further endearing. Paul in the highest degree of ministry, not only calls Timothy an evangelist, *his brother*, but Philemon, an ordinary pastor, *his dearly beloved fellow-labourer*: An example of humility and condescension, and of all loving regards, even in those that are highest in the church, towards others that are labourers in the same special heavenly calling. With Philemon Apphia is joined, probably his yoke-fellow; and having a concern in the domestic affairs, the apostle directs to her likewise. She was a party offended and injured by Onesimus, and therefore proper to be taken notice of in a letter for reconciliation and forgiveness. Justice and prudence would direct Paul to this express notice of her, who might be helpful and furthering of the good ends of his writing. She is set before Archippus, as more concerned, and having more interest. A loving conjunction there is in domestic matters between husband and wife, whose interests are one, and affections and actions must be according. These are the principal parties written to. The less principal are Archippus, and the church in *Philemon's house*. Archippus was a minister in the church of Coloss, Philemon's friend, and probably co-pastor with him; Paul might think him one whom Philemon would advise with, and who might be capable of furthering the good work of peace-making and forgiveness, and therefore might judge fit to put him in the inscription of the letter, with

the adjunct of fellow-soldier. He had called Philemon his fellow-labourer. Ministers must look on themselves as labourers and soldiers, who must therefore take pains and endure hardships; they must stand on the guard and make good their post; and must look on one another as fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers, who must stand together, and strengthen one another's hands and hearts in any work of their holy function and calling; they need see to it that they be provided of spiritual weapons, and skill to use them; as labourers, they must consider the word, and sacraments, and discipline, and watch over souls, as those that must give an account of them; and as soldiers they must fight the Lord's battles, and not intangle themselves in the things of this life, but attending to the pleasing of him who hath chosen them to be soldiers, 2 Tim. ii. 4. To these it is added, *And to the church in thy house*, i. e. his whole family, in which the worship of God was kept up; so that he had, as it were, a church in his house. Observe, Families which generally may be most pious and orderly; yet may have one or other in them impious and wicked. This was the aggravation of Onesimus's sin, that it was where he might and should have learned better; it is like he was secret in his misdeeds, till his flight discovered him. Hearts are unknown but to God, till overt-acts discover them; yet this one evil servant did not hinder Philemon's house to be called and counted a church, for the religious worship and order that was kept up in it; and such should all families be nurseries of religion, societies where God is called on, his word read, and sabbaths observed, and the members instructed in the knowledge of him, and of their duty to him: Neglect of which is followed with ignorance and all corruption. Wicked families are nurseries for hell, as good ones are for heaven. Masters and others of the family may not think it enough to be good, singly, and severally in their personal capacities, but they must be socially so; as here Philemon's house was a church: and Paul, for some concern that all might have in this matter of Onesimus, directs to them all; that their affection, as well as Philemon's, might return to him; and that in their way and place they might further and not hinder the reconciliation wished and sought. Desirable it is that all in a family be well affected toward one another, for furthering their particular and the common good and benefit of all. On such accounts might it be that Paul inscribes his letter here so generally, that all might be the more ready to own and receive this poor convert, and to carry lovingly toward him. Next to this inscription is,

3. The apostle's salutation of those named by him.

3. Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the token in every epistle; so the apostle writes: He is an hearty well-wisher to all his friends, and wishes for them the best things; not gold or silver, or any earthly good in the first or chiefest place, but grace and peace from God in Christ; he cannot give them himself, but he prays for them from him who can bestow them. Grace, i. e. the free favour and good-will of God the spring and fountain of all blessings. And peace, i. e. all good, as the fruit and effect of that grace. To you, i. e. be bestowed on you, and continued to you, with the comfortable feeling and sense of it in yourselves. From God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. The holy Spirit also is understood, though not named; for all act towards the creatures are of the whole Trinity: From the Father, who is our Father in Christ; the first in order of acting as of subsisting; and from Christ, his favour and good-will as God, and the fruits of it through him as Mediator God-man; it is in the beloved that we are accepted, and through him we have peace and all good things; who is, with the Father and Spirit, to be looked to, and blessed and praised for all, and to be owned, not only as Jesus and Christ, but as Lord also. In 2 Cor. xiii. 14. the apostle's benediction is full; *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.* Observe, Spiritual blessings are first and especially to be sought for ourselves and others. The favour of God and peace with him, as in itself it is the best and most desirable good, so it is the cause of all other; and what puts sweetness into every mercy, and can make happy even in the want of all earthly things. *Though there be no herd in the stall, and the labour of the olive fail, &c. yet may such rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation,* Hab. iii. 17, 18. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good? But if God lift up the light of his countenance, that will put more joy and gladness into the heart than all worldly increase,* Psal. iv. 6, 7. And Num. vi. 6. *The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* In this is summarily all good, and from this one fountain, God the Father, Son, and Spirit, all comes. After this salutation of the apostle to Philemon, and his friends and family, for better making way still for his suit to him,

4. He expresses the singular affection he had for him, by thanksgiving and prayer to God in his behalf, and the great joy for the many good things he knew and heard to be in him, in the four next following verses.

4. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers. 5. Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; 6. That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

The apostle's thanksgiving and prayer here for Philemon are set forth by the object and circumstance, and matter of them, with the way whereby much of the knowledge of Philemon's goodness came to him.

(1.) Here is the object of Paul's praises and prayers for Philemon; *I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers.* 1. Observe, God is the author of all the good in any, or that is done by them, Hosea xiv. 8. *From me is thy fruit found.* 2. Observe, To him therefore is all the praise due, 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14. *But [or for] who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, both wherewith to offer, and the will and heart to do it: On which account [says he] We thank thee our God, and praise thy glorious name.* 3. Observe, It is the privilege of good men, that in their praises and prayers they come to God as their God; *Our God we thank thee,* said David; and *I thank my God,* said Paul. 4. Observe, Our prayers and praises should be offered up to God, not for ourselves only, but for others also. Private addresses should not be altogether of a private spirit, minding our own things only, but others must be remembered by us; we must be affected with joy and thankfulness for any good in them, or done by them, or bestowed on them, as far as is known to us; and seek for them what they need. In this lies no little part of the communion of saints. St. Paul in his private thanksgivings and prayers, was often particular in remembering his friends: *I thank my*

God, making mention of thee in my prayers; sometimes it may be my name, or however having them particularly in his thoughts, and God knows who is meant though not named: This is a means of exercising love, and obtaining good for others. *Strive with me by your prayers to God for me,* said the apostle: and what he desired for himself to be sure he practised in others behalf: And so should all do. *Pray for one another,* says St. James, chap. v. 16.

(2.) Here is the circumstance: *Always making mention of thee.* Always, i. e. usually, not once or twice only, but frequently. So must were member Christian friends much and often, as their case may need, bearing them in our thoughts and upon our hearts before our God.

(3.) Here is the matter both of his praises and prayers, in reference to Philemon.

(1.) Of his praises.

(1.) He thanks God for the love which he heard Philemon had towards the Lord Jesus. He is to be loved as God superlatively, as his divine perfections require; and as related to us, the Lord, and our Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Saviour, who loved us and gave himself for us. Paul thanks God for what he heard of this, the signal marks and expressions of it in Philemon. And,

(2.) For his faith in Christ also. Love to Christ and faith in him are primo Christian graces, for which there is great ground of praise to God where he hath blessed any with them, Rom. i. 8. *I thank my God because your faith is published throughout the world:* And in reference to the Colossians, chap. i. 3, 4. *We give thanks to God since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.* This is a saving grace, and the very principle of Christian life and of all good works.

(3.) He praiseth God likewise for his love to all the saints: These two must go together; for he who loveth him that begat, must and will love them also that are begotten of him. The apostle joins them in that, Col. i. 3, 4. *We give thanks to God since we heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.* These bear the image of Christ, which will be loved by every Christian. Different sentiments and ways in what is not essential, will not make difference of affection, i. e. as to the truth; though difference in the degrees of love will be as according more or less of that image is discerned. Mere external differences are nothing here: Paul calls a poor converted slave his bowels. We must love, as God does, all saints. Paul thanked God not only for the good that was in the churches, but in the particular persons he wrote to: And though he had his account by report: *Hearing of the love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and toward all saints:* This was what he enquired after concerning his friends, the truth and growth and fruitfulness of their graces, their faith in Christ, and love to him and to all the saints. Love to saints, if it be sincere, will be catholic and universal love towards all saints: but faith and love as in the heart are hidden things, they are known by the effects of them. Therefore,

(2.) The apostle joins prayer with his praises, that the fruits of Philemon's faith and love might be more and more conspicuous, so as that the communication of them might constrain others to the acknowledgment of all the good things that were in him and his house toward Christ Jesus, i. e. that their light might so shine before men, that they seeing their good works might be stirred up to imitate them and to glorify their Father which is in heaven. Good works must be done not of vain glory to be seen, yet such as may be seen to God's glory and the good of men.

(4.) He adds a reason, both of his prayer and praises, ver. 7. *For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.* The good thou hast done and still doest, is abundant matter of joy and comfort to me and others, who therefore desire you may continue and abound in such good fruits more and more to God's honour and the credit of religion, 2 Cor. ix. 12. *The ministration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.*

Thus far is the preface to this epistle. Now,

II. He comes to that which is the main business of it, viz. to plead with Philemon in behalf of Onesimus, to receive him, and be reconciled to him. Many arguments he urges to this purpose from ver. 8 to 21 inclusive.

8. Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient. 9. Yet for love sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Here is the

1. Argument, from what was before noted and is carried in the illative wherefore, i. e. seeing so much good is reported of thee and found in thee, especially thy love to all saints, now let me see it on a fresh and further occasion, refresh the bowels of Onesimus and mine also, in forgiving and receiving him who is now a convert, and so a saint indeed, and meet for thy favour and love. Observe, A disposition to do good, and past instances and expressions of it, is a good handle to take hold on for pressing unto more: *Be not weary of well doing, go on as thou art able, and as new objects and occasions occur to do the same still.*

2. Argument, is from the authority of him that is now making this request to him. *I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient.* The apostles had under Christ, great power in the church over the ordinary ministers, as well as the members of it, for edification; they might require of them what was fit, and was therein to be obeyed, which Philemon should consider; this was a matter within the compass of the apostle's power to require, though he would not in this instance act up to it. Observe, Ministers, whatever their power be in the church, are to use prudence in the exercise of it; they may not unseasonably, or further than is requisite, put it forth; in all they must use godly wisdom and discretion. Wherefore this may be a

3. Argument. Waving the authority which yet he had to require, he chooses to intreat it of him, ver. 9. *Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee.* Observe, It is no disparagement for those that have power yet to be condescending, and sometimes even to beseech where, in strictness of right, they might command; so does Paul here, though an apostle: He intreats where he might enjoin, he argues from love rather than authority, which doubts must carry engaging influence with it. And especially which may be a

4. Argument. When any circumstance of the person pleading gives additional force to his petition, as here; *Being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.* Years bespeak respect, and the motions of such in things lawful and fit should be received with regard. The request of an aged apostle, and now suffering for Christ and his gospel, should be tenderly considered. If thou wilt do any thing for a poor aged prisoner, to comfort me in my bonds and make my chain lighter, grant me this which I desire: Hereby in a sort you will do honour to Christ in the person of an aged

aged suffering servant of his, which doubtless he will take as done to himself. He makes also a

5. *Argument*, from the spiritual relation now between Onesimus and himself.

10. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.

Though of right and in civil respect he be thy servant, yet in a spiritual sense he is now a son to me, God having made me the instrument of his conversion, even here where I am a prisoner for Christ's sake. So does God sometimes honour and comfort his suffering servants, not only working good in themselves, by their sufferings, exercising and improving thereby their own graces, but making them a means of much spiritual good to others, either to their conversion, as of Onesimus here; or of their confirmation and strengthening, as Phil. i. 14. *Many brethren, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word of the Lord without fear.* When God's servants are bound, yet his word and Spirit are not bound; spiritual children may then be born to them. The apostle lays an emphasis here; *My son whom I have begotten in my bonds*; he was dear to him, and he hoped would be so to Philemon under that consideration. Prison mercies are sweet and much set by. Paul makes an argument to Philemon from this dear relation that now was between Onesimus and him, his son begotten in his bonds. And a

6. *Argument*, is from Philemon's own interest.

11. Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.

1. Observe, Unsanctified persons are unprofitable persons, they answer not the great end of their being and relations. Grace makes good for somewhat: *In time past unprofitable, but now profitable*, i. e. inclined and fitted to be so, and will be so to thee his master, if thou receive him as he hath since his conversion been here to me, ministering to me in my confinement. There seems an allusion to the name Onesimus, which signifies profitable: Now he will answer his name. It may be noted also how the apostle speaks in this matter, not as Onesimus's former case and carriage might warrant; he had wronged his master and ran away from him, and lived as he were his own and not his; yet as God covers the sins of penitents, forgives and does not upbraid, so should men. How softly does Paul here speak? Not that Onesimus's sin was small, or that he would have any, much less himself, to take it so; but having been humble for it, and doubtless taken shame to himself on account thereof, the apostle now would not sink his spirit by continuing to load and burden him therewith, but speaks thus tenderly when he was pleading with Philemon not to make severe reflections on his servant's mis-carriage, but to forgive. 2. Observe, What happy changes conversion makes: of evil, good; of unprofitable, useful; Religious servants are a treasure in a family. *Now profitable to thee and to me.* Such will make conscience of their time and trusts, promoting the interests of those whom they serve, a managing all they can for the best. This, then, is the argument here urged, it will now be for thy advantage to receive him: Thus changed as he is, thou mayest expect him a dutiful and faithful servant, though in time past he was not so. Whereupon,

7. *Argument*, he urges Philemon from the strong affection that he had to Onesimus. He had mentioned the spiritual relation before, *my son begotten in my bonds*, and now he signifies how dear he was to him.

12. Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is mine own bowels.

I love him as I do myself, and have sent him back to thee for this end that thou shouldest receive him; do it therefore for my sake, receive him as one thus dear to me. Observe, Even good men may sometimes need great earnestness and intreaty to lay their passions and let go their resentments, and forgive those who have injured and offended them. Some have thought it to look this way when Paul is so pathetic and earnest, mustering up to many pleas and arguments to gain what he requests. Philemon, a Phrygian, might perhaps be naturally of a rough and difficult temper, and thence need no little pains in touching all the springs that might move him to forgiveness and reconciliation; but rather should we strive to be like God, who is *slow to anger, and ready to forgive, and abundant in pardons.* And again, an

8. *Argument*, is from the apostle's denying himself in sending back Onesimus: though he might have presumed upon Philemon's leave to detain him longer, yet he would not.

13. Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. 14. But without thy mind would I do nothing: that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

Paul was now in prison and wanted a friend or servant to act for him and assist him, for which he found Onesimus fit and ready, and therefore would have detained him to minister to him instead of Philemon himself, whom if he had requested to have come to him in person for such purpose, he might have presumed he would not have refused; much less might he have reckoned that he would be unwilling his servant should do this in his stead; but yet he would not take this liberty though his circumstances need it. *I have sent him back to thee* that any good office of thine to me might not be of necessity, but willingly. Observe, Good deeds are most acceptable to God and man when done with most freedom. And Paul herein, notwithstanding his apostolical power, would shew what regard he had to civil rights, which Christianity does by no means supersede or weaken, but rather confirm and strengthen. Onesimus he knew was Philemon's servant, and therefore without his consent not to be detained from him; in his unconverted state he had violated that right and withdrawn himself to his master's wrong, but now he had seen his sin and repented, he was willing and desirous to return to his duty, and Paul would not hinder but further this rather. He might indeed have presumed on Philemon's willingness, but notwithstanding his need he would deny himself rather than take that way. And he urges farther,

9. *Argument*, that such a change was now wrought in Onesimus, that Philemon need not fear his ever running from him or injuring him any more. There are those of whom Solomon saith, *if thou deliver them thou must do it again*, Prov. xix. 19. but the change wrought in Onesimus was such that he would never again need one thus to intercede for him.

15. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.

Charity would so hope and judge, yea so it would be! yet the apostle speaks cautiously, that none might be bold to make another such experiment in expectation of a like gracious issue. 1. Observe, In matters that may be wrested to ill, ministers must speak warily, that kind providences of God towards sinners be not abused to encouragements to sin or abatements of just abhorrence of it; *Perhaps he therefore departed from thee for a season, &c.* 2. Observe, How softly still the sins of penitents are spoken of, he calls it a *departure for a season*, instead of giving it the term that it deserved; as over-ruled and ordered by God it was a *departure*; but in itself and in respect of the disposition and manner of the act it was a *criminal going away*. When we speak of the nature of any sin or offence against us God, the evil of it is not to be lessened; but in the person of a penitent sinner as God covers it so must we: *He departed for a season that thou shouldest receive him for ever*, i. e. that upon conversion he may return and be a faithful servant to thee as long as he lives. *Bray a fool in a mortar yet will not his folly depart from him.* But it is not so with true penitents, they will not return to folly. 3. Observe, The wisdom and goodness and power of God, in issuing that so happily that was begun and carried on for some time so wickedly; thus regarding a poor vassal, one of such low rank and condition and so little regarded by men, working so good and great a change in him that was so far gone in evil ways, that had wronged a master so good, had run from a family so pious, from the means of grace, *the church is his house*, that he should be led into the way of salvation that had fled from it, and find means made effectual at Rome, who had been hardened under them at Coloss. What riches are here of divine grace! None so low, or mean, or vile, as utterly to be despaired of. God can meet with them when running from him, can make means effectual at one time and place which have not been so at another. So was it in this instance of Onesimus, being returned to God he now returns to his master, who will have more service and better hold of him than ever, viz. by conscious of his duty and faithfulness in it to his life's end; his interest therefore it will be now to receive him. So God often brings gain to his out of their losses. And beside interest, a

10. *Argument*, is taken from the capacity under which Onesimus now would return, and must be received by Philemon.

16. Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?

Not now a servant, i. e. not merely or so much, but above a servant, viz. in a spiritual respect, a brother beloved, one to be owned as a brother in Christ, and to be loved as such upon this holy change that is wrought in him, and one therefore that will be useful to thee upon better principles and in a better manner than before; that will love and promote the best things in thy family and thy blessing in it, and help to keep up the church that is in thy house. 1. Observe, There is a spiritual brotherhood between all true believers however differenced in civil and outward respects; they are all children of the same heavenly Father, have right to the same spiritual privileges and benefits, must love and do all good offices to and for one another as brethren, though still in the same rank, and degree, and station, wherein they were called. Christianity doth not null or confound respective civil duties, but strengthen the obligation to them and direct to a right discharge of them. 2. Observe, Religious servants are more than mere ordinary servants, they have grace in their hearts, and have found grace in God's sight, and so will in the sight of religious masters, Psalm ci. 6. *Mine eyes are upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.* Onesimus being now become such, receive and affect him as one that is partaker of the same common faith, and so a brother beloved especially to me who have been the instrument of his conversion. Good ministers love not so much according to the outward good which they receive as the spiritual good which they do. Paul called Onesimus *his own bowels*, and other converts *his joy and crown*. A brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord; by a double tie therefore, viz. both civil and religious; thy servant, thy property, one of thy house and family, and in a spiritual respect now thy brother in Christ; which heightens the engagement, he is God's servant and thine too; here are more ties than he is under unto me. How readily therefore should he be received and loved by thee, as one of thy family, and one of the true faith, one of thy house and one of the church in thy house? And this argument is strengthened with another, viz.

11. *Argument*, From the communion of saints.

17. If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

There is a fellowship among saints, they have interest one in another, and must love and act accordingly. Now shew thy love to me and the interest I have in thee, by loving and receiving one so near and dear to me, even as myself; own and treat him as thou wouldst me, with a like ready and true though perhaps not equal affection.

But, *Question*, Why such concern and earnestness for a servant, a slave, and such an one as had miscarried? *Answer*, Onesimus being now penitent, it was doubtless to encourage him and to support him against the fears he might have in returning to a master whom he had so much abused and wronged, to keep him from sinking despondency and dejection, and hearten him to his duty. Wife and good ministers will have great and tender care of young converts, to encourage and hearten them what they can to and in their duty. *Objection*. But Onesimus had wronged us well as offended his master. The answer to this makes a

12. *Argument*, A promise of satisfaction to Philemon.

18. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. 19. I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

Here are three things, viz.

(1.) A confession of Onesimus's debt to Philemon: *If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought.* It is not an if of doubting, but of illation and concession, seeing he hath wronged thee and thereby in becoming indebted to thee; such an if as Coloss. iii. 1. and 2 Pet. ii. 4, &c. Observe, True penitents will be ingenuous in owning their faults, as doubtless Onesimus had been to Paul, upon his awakening and being brought to repentance; and especially

is this to be done in cases of injury to others. Onesimus by Paul owns the wrong. And;

(2.) Paul here engages for satisfaction: *Put that on my account, I Paul have written it with my own hand. I will repay it.* Whence, 1. Observe, The communion of saints does not destroy distinction of property: Onesimus now converted and become a *brother beloved*, yet is Philemon's servant still, and indebted to him for wrongs that he had done, and not to be discharged but by free and voluntary remission, or on reparation made by himself or some other in his behalf; which part, rather than fail, the apostle undertakes for him. Upon which, 2. Observe, Suretyship is not in all cases unlawful, but in some is a good and merciful undertaking. Only know the person and case, be not *surety for a stranger*, Prov. xi. 15. and go not beyond ability, help thy friend thou mayest, as far as will stand with justice and prudence. And how happy for us that Christ would be made a surety of a better covenant, Heb. vii. 22. that he would be made *sin for us, who know no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?* And, 3. Observe, Formal securities by writing, as well by word and promise, may be required and given. Persons die and words may be forgotten or mistaken; writing better preserves right and peace, and hath been in use with good persons, as well as others, in all ages, Jer. xxxii. 9. &c. Luke xvi. 5, 6, 7. It was much that Paul, who lived on contributions himself, would undertake to make good all loss by an evil servant to his master; but hereby he expresses his real and great affection for Onesimus, and his full belief of the sincerity of his conversion: And he might have hope, notwithstanding this generous offer, Philemon would not insist on it, but freely remit all; considering,

(3.) The reason of things between him and Philemon: *Albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me even thine ownself besides; i. e. thou wilt remember me, without my minding thee, thou art on other accounts more in debt to me than this comes to.* Modesty in self-praises is true praise. The apostle glances at it, how beneficial he had been to Philemon; That thou art any thing in grace and acceptance with God, or enjoyest any thing in a right and comfortable manner, it is under God owing to my ministry; I have been the instrument in his hand of all that spiritual good to thee, and what thy obligation to me on this account is, I leave to thee to consider. Thy forgiving a pecuniary debt to a poor penitent for my sake and on my request, and which, however, I now take upon myself to answer, thy remitting it to him, or to me, now his surety, thou wilt confess is not so great a thing: here is more *per contra*, *thou owest to me even thine ownself besides.* Observe, How great the endeavours are between ministers, and those toward whom their endeavours have been blessed to their conversion or spiritual edification: *If it had been possible (said Paul to the Galatians) ye would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.* Gal. iv. 15. On the other hand he calls them his children, whom he travailed again, till Christ was formed in them, i. e. the likeness of Christ more fully. So 1 Thess. ii. 8. *We were willing to have imparted to you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear to us.* By way of allusion this may illustrate Christ's undertaking for us; we were revolted from God and by sin had wronged him, but Christ undertakes to make satisfaction, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. If the sinner owes thee ought put it upon my account. I will pay the debt; let his iniquity be laid on me, I will bear the penalty. Further,

13. *Argument*, Is from the joy and comfort the apostle hereby would have on Philemon's own account, as well as Onesimus's, in such a seasonable and acceptable fruit of Philemon's faith and obedience.

20. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

Philemon was Paul's son in the faith, yet he entreats him as a brother; Onesimus a poor slave, yet he solicits for him as if he were seeking some great thing for himself. How pathetic is he? Yea brother, or O my brother, it is an adverb of wishing or desiring, let me have joy of thee in the Lord. Thou knowest that I am now a prisoner of the Lord; i. e. for his sake and cause, and need all the comfort and support that my friends in Christ can give me: Now this will be a joy to me, I shall have joy of thee in the Lord, as seeing such an evidence and fruit of thy own Christian faith and love, and on Onesimus's account, who hereby will be relieved and encouraged. 1. Observe, Christians should do the things that may joy the hearts of one another, both people and ministers reciprocally; and ministers of their brethren: From the world they expect trouble, and where may they look for comfort and joy but in one another? 2. Observe, Fruits of faith and obedience in the people are the minister's greatest joy, especially the more of love appears in them to Christ and his members, forgiving injuries, shewing compassion, being merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful. Refresh my bowels in the Lord. It is not any carnal selfish respect I am actuated by, but what is pleasing to Christ and that he may have honour therein. 1. Observe, The Lord's honour and service is a Christian's chief aim in all things. And, 2. Observe, It is meat and drink to a good minister to see people ready and zealous in what is good, especially in acts of charity and beneficence, as occasions occur, forgiving injuries, and remitting somewhat of their right and the like. And once more, his last, which is the

14. *Argument*, Lies in his good hope and opinion which he expresseth of Philemon.

21. Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

Good thoughts and expectations of us more strongly move and engage to do the things expected from us. The apostle knew Philemon to be a good man, and was thence persuaded of his readiness to do good, and that not in a scanty and niggardly manner, but with a free and liberal hand. Observe, Good persons will be ready for good works, and not narrow and pinching, but abundant in them, Isa. xxxii. 8. *The liberal deviseth liberal things.* The Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to his apostles by the will of God, to do what good they could with what they had, according as occasions offered.

Thus far is the substance and body of the epistle. Now he comes,

III. To the conclusion. Where,

1. He signifies his good hope of deliverance through their prayers, and that shortly he might see them, desiring Philemon to make provision for him.

22. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

But withal, or moreover: He comes to another thing, yet, as may seem not without some eye to the matter which he had been upon, that might be furthered by this intimation, that he hoped he should himself soon follow, and know the effect of his epistle, which Philemon would therefore be the more stirred up to see that it might be to his satisfaction. Now here is,

(1.) The thing requested: *Prepare me also a lodging*; under this all necessities for a stranger are included. He wills Philemon to do it, intending to be his guest, as most to his purpose. Observe, Hospitality is a great Christian duty, especially in ministers and towards ministers, such as the apostle was, coming out of such dangers and sufferings for Christ and his gospel. Who would not shew the utmost of affectionate regards to such an one? It is an honourable title he gave Gaius, Rom. xvi. 23. *Mine host, and of the whole church.* Onesiphorus is also affectionately remembered by the apostle on this account, 2 Tim. i. 16. *The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus: for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; and in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus thou knowest.*

(2.) Here the ground of the apostle's request: *For I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* He did not know how God might deal with him, but the benefit of prayer he had often found, and hoped he should again, for deliverance and liberty to come to them. 1. Observe, Our dependance is on God for life and liberty and opportunity of service; all is by divine pleasure. 2. Observe, When abridged of these or any other mercies, our trust and hope must be in God, without fainting or succumbing, while our case is depending. But yet, 3. Observe, Trust must be with the use of means, prayer especially, though no other should be at hand, this hath unlocked heaven and opened prison-doors. *The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much.* 4. Observe, Prayer of people for ministers especially when they are in distress and danger, is their great duty, minister need and request it. Paul, though an apostle, did so with much earnestness, Rom. xv. 30. 2 Cor. i. 11. Eph. vi. 18, 19. 1 Thess. v. 25. The least may this way be helpful to the greatest. Yet, 5. Observe, Though prayer obtains, yet it does not merit the things obtained; They are God's gift and Christ's purchase. *I trust that through your prayers.* *καταδικάσαι ἑμὲ, ἵνα ἐλευθέρωμαι ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος τούτου.* I shall be freely bestowed on you. What God gives, yet he will be sought to for, that mercies may be valued the more, and known whence they come, and God may have the praise. Ministers lives and labours are for the people's good; the office was set up for them; he gave gifts for men, apostles, &c. Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. Their gifts, and labours, and lives, all are for their benefit, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. *All things are yours, Apollos, Cephas, &c.* 5. Observe, In praying for faithful ministers, people in effect pray for themselves. *I trust I shall be given unto thee; i. e. for your service and comfort, and edification in Christ.* See 2 Cor. iv. 5. 7. Observe, The humility of the apostle; his liberty, should he have it, he would own to be through their prayers, as well as or more than his own; he mentions them only through the high thoughts he had of the prayers of many, and the regard God would shew to his praying people. Thus of the first thing in the apostle's conclusion.

2. He sends salutations from one that was his fellow-prisoner and four more that were his fellow-labourers.

23. There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus: 24. Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers.

Saluting is wishing health and peace. Christianity is no enemy to courtesy, but enjoins it, 1 Pet. iii. 8. It is a mere expression of love and respect, and means to preserve and nourish it. *There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus:* He was of Coloss, and so countrymen and fellow-citizen with Philemon; by office he seems to have been an evangelist, who laboured among the Colossians; if he was not the first converter of them for whom he had special affection. *Our dear fellow-servant* (saith St. Paul) *and for you a faithful minister of Christ,* Col. i. 7. and chap. iv. 12. *a servant of Christ, always labouring for you in prayers.* I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you, &c. A very eminent person therefore this was, who being at Rome, perhaps accompanying Paul, and labouring in the same work of preaching and propagating the gospel, was confined in the same prison and for the same cause; both termed *prisoners in Jesus Christ*, intimating the ground of their imprisonment, not any crime or wickedness, but for the faith of Christ and their service to him. An honour it is to suffer shame for Christ's name. *My fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus*, is mentioned as his glory and the apostle's comfort; not that he was a prisoner and so hindered from his work: that was matter of affliction, but that seeing God thus permitted and called him to suffer, his providence so ordered it that they suffered together, and so had the benefit and comfort of one another's prayers, and help it may be in some things; this was a mercy. So God sometimes lightens the sufferings of his servants by the communion of saints, the sweet fellowship they have one with another in their bonds: Never more enjoyment of God have they found than when suffering together for God: So Paul and Silas, when their feet were fast in the stocks, their tongues were at liberty, and their hearts tuned for the praises of God. "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers." The mention of these seems in a sort to interest them in the business of the latter. How ill would it look by denial of the request of it to slight so many worthy names, as most of these (at least) were; Marcus, cousin of Barnabas, and son of Mary, who was so hospitable to the saints at Jerusalem, Col. iv. 10. Acts xii. 12. and whose house was the place of meeting for prayer and worship of God; Though some failing seems to have been in him when Paul and he parted, yet in conjunction with Barnabas he went on with his work, and here Paul and he, we see, were reconciled and differences forgotten, 2 Tim. iv. 11. He bids Mark to be brought to him, *for he is profitable to me for the ministry*, viz. of an evangelist. Aristarchus mentioned with Marcus, Col. iv. 10. and called there by Paul his *fellow-prisoner*; and speaking there of Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, he adds, *touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you receive him.* An evidence that himself had received him and was reconciled to him. Next is Demas, who hitherto, it seems, appears not faulty, though 2 Tim. iv. 10. he is censured as having forsaken Paul from love of this present world. But how far his forsaking was, whether total from his work and profession, or partial only; and whether he repented, and returned to his duty, scripture is silent; and so must we: no mark of disgrace lay on him here, but he is joined with others that were faithful, as he is also in Col. iv. 14. Lucas is the last, that *beloved physician* and evangelist, who came to Rome companion with Paul, Col. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. He was Paul's associate in his greatest dangers, and fellow-labourer. The ministry is not a matter of carnal ease or pleasure, but of pains; if any are idle in it, they answer not their callings. Christ bids to *pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers*, not loiterers, into his harvest, Matt. ix. 38. And the people are bid to *know them that labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*, 1 Thess. v. 12. *My fellow-labourers*, faith the apostle: ministers must be helpers together of the truth, they serve the same Lord, in the same holy work and function, and are expectants of the same glorious reward; therefore must be assistants to each other in furthering the interest of their great and common master. Thus of the salutations, and then,

3. Here is the apostle's closing prayer and benediction.

55. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Here is,

(1.) What is wished and prayed for, viz. *Grace*, i. e. the free favour and love of God, together with the fruits and effects of it in all good things, for soul and body, for time and eternity. Observe, *Grace* is the best wish for ourselves and others; with this the apostle begins and ends.

(2.) From whom, viz. *our Lord Jesus Christ*, i. e. the Son of God, second person in the Trinity, *Lord* by natural right, *by whom and for whom all things were created*, Col. i. 16. John i. 1, 2, 3. *and who is heir of all things*, and as God-man and Mediator, who purchased us, and to whom we are given by the Father, *Jesus*, i. e. the Saviour, *Matt.* i. 21. We were lost and undone, he recovers us, and repairs the ruin; he saves by *merit*, procuring pardon and life for us; and by *power*, rescuing us from sin, and Satan, and hell, and renewing us to the likeness, and bringing us to the enjoyment of God: Thus is he *Jesus*, and *Christ* the Messiah or anointed, i. e. consecrated and fitted to be king, priest and prophet to this church. To all those officers were there anointings under the law with oil, and to them was the Saviour spiritually anointed with the Holy Ghost, *Acts* x. 38.

In none but he were all these together, and in such eminence: *He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*, Psalm xlv. 7. This Lord Jesus Christ is ours by original title to us, and by gospel offers and gift, his purchase of us, and our acceptance of him, and resignation to him, and mystical union with him: *Our Lord Jesus Christ*. Observe, All grace to us is from Christ: he purchased and he bestows it. *Of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. *He filleth all in all*. Eph. i. 23.

(3.) To whom; *Your spirit*, *μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ἡμῶν*, not Philemon's only but of all that were named in the inscription; *With your spirit*, i. e. with you, the soul or spirit being the immediate seat of grace, whence it influences the whole man, and flows out in gracious and holy actions. All the house saluted are here joined in the closing benediction, the more to mind and quicken all to further the end of the epistle.

Amen, is added not only for strong and affectionate summing up the prayer and wish, *so let it be*; but as an expression of faith that it will be heard, *so shall it be*. And what need we more to make us happy, than to have the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with our spirit*? This is the usual benediction, but it may be taken here to have some special respect also to the occasion; the grace of Christ with their spirits, Philemon especially, would sweeten and mollify them, and take off too deep and keen resentments of injuries, and dispose to forgive others as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE EPISTLE TO THE H E B R E W S.

CONCERNING this epistle we must inquire, 1. *Into the divine authority of it*; for this has been questioned by some, whose distempered eyes could not bear the light of it, or whose errors have been confused by it. Such as the Arians, who deny the *Godhead* and *Self-existence* of Christ, and the Socinians who deny his *Satisfaction*: But after all the attempts of such men to disparage this epistle, the divine original of it shine forth with those strong and unclouded rays, that he that runs may read it as an eminent part of the canon of scripture: the divinity of the matter, the sublimity of the style, the excellency of the design, the harmony of this with other parts of scripture, and its general reception in the church of God in all ages; these are the evidences of its divine authority. 2. As to the *divine amanuensis*, or penman of this epistle, we are not so certain; it beareth not the name of any one in the front of it, as the rest of the epistles do, and there has been some dispute among the learned to whom they should ascribe it: Some have assigned it to Clemens of Rome; others to Luke, and many to Barnabas, thinking that the style and manner of expression is very agreeable to the zealous, authoritative, affectionate temper that Barnabas appears to be of, in the account we have of him in the Acts of the Apostles; and one ancient father quotes an expression out of this epistle, as the words of Barnabas. But it is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul's name in the title: In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the style and scope of it very well agrees with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and warm heart, whose main end and endeavour was to exalt Christ. And some think that the apostle Peter refers to this epistle, and proves Paul to be the penman of it, by telling the Hebrews to whom he wrote, of Paul's having written to him, 2 *Peter* iii. 15. And we read of no other epistle that he ever wrote to them but this; and though it has been objected, that since Paul put his name to all his other epistles, he would not have omitted it here; yet others have well answered, that he being the *apostle of the Gentiles*, who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, lest their prejudices against him might hinder them from reading it, and weighing as they ought to do. 3. As to the *scope and design* of this epistle, it is very evident it was clearly to inform the minds, and strongly to confirm the judgment of the Hebrews in the transcendent excellency of the *gospel* about the *law*, and so take them off from the ceremonies of the law to which they were so wedded, of which they were so fond, that they even doted on them. And those of them that are Christians retained too much of the *old leaven*, and wanted to be purged from it; the design of this epistle was to persuade and press the believing Hebrews to a constant adherence to the Christian faith; and perseverance in it, notwithstanding all the sufferings they might meet with in so doing. In order to this he speaks much of the excellency of the *author* of the *gospel*, the *glorious Jesus*, whose honour he advances, and whom he justly prefers before all others, shewing him to be all in all, and this in lofty strains of holy rhetoric. It must be acknowledged there are many things in this epistle hard to be understood; but the sweetness we shall find therein will make us abundant amends for all the pains we take to understand it. And indeed, If we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter, than this to the Hebrews.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we have a twofold comparison stated. (1.) Between the evangelical and legal dispensation, and the excellency of the *gospel* above that of the *law* is asserted and proved, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) Between the glory of Christ, and that of the highest creatures, the *angels*; where the pre-eminence is justly given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and clearly demonstrated to belong unto him, from ver. 4, to the end of the chapter.

1. **G**OD, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by prophets. 2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

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Here the apostle begins with a general declaration of the excellency of the *gospel* dispensation above that of the *law*, which he demonstrates from the different way and manner of God's communicating himself and his mind and will to men, in the one and the other; both of these dispensations were of God, and both of them very good; but there is a great difference in the way of their coming from God.

1. Observe the way wherein God communicated himself and his will to men under the *Old Testament*; and we have here an account, (1.) Of the persons by whom God spoke his mind under the *Old Testament*, and they were the prophets, that is, persons chosen of God, and qualified by him for that office, of revealing the will of God to men. No man taketh this honour to himself unless called; and whoever are called of God are qualified by him. (2.) The persons to whom God spoke by the prophets to the fathers, i. e. to all the *Old Testament* saints that were under that dispensation: God favoured and honoured them with much clearer light than that of nature under which the rest of the world were left. (2.) The order in which God spoke to men in those times that went before the *gospel*, those past times. He spake to his ancient people at sundry times and in divers manners. (1.) At sundry times, or by several parts, as the word signifies, which may refer either to the several ages of the *Old Testament* dispensation, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, or the prophetic: or to the several gradual openings of his mind piece-meal concerning the Redeemer. To Adam,

Adam, that the Messiah should come of the seed of the woman; to Abraham, that he should spring from his loins; to Jacob that he should be of the tribe of Judah; to David that he should be of his house; to Micah, that he should be born at Bethlehem, to Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin. (2.) *In divers manners*, according to the different ways in which God thought fit to communicate his mind to his prophets; sometimes by the *illapses* of his Spirit, sometimes by *dreams*, sometimes by *visions*, sometimes by an *audible voice*, sometimes by *legible characters* under his own hand, as when he wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone; of some of these different ways God himself gave an account in *Num. xii. 6, 7. If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches.*

2. Observe God's method of communicating himself and his mind and will under the *New Testament dispensation* these *last days*, as they are called, *i. e.* either towards the end of the world, or the end of the Jewish state. The times of the gospel are the *last times*, the gospel-revelation is the *last* we are to expect from God; there was first the *natural revelation*, then the *patriarchal by dreams, visions, and voices*; then the *Mosaic* in the law given forth and written down; then the *prophetic* in explaining the law, and giving clearer discoveries of Christ; but now we must expect no new revelation, but only more of the Spirit of Christ to help us better to understand what is already revealed. Now the excellency of the gospel revelation above the former consists in two things:

1. *It is the final, the finishing revelation*, given forth in the *last days* of divine revelation, to which nothing is to be added but the canon of scripture to be settled and sealed. So that now the minds of men are no longer kept in suspense by the expectation of new discoveries, but they rejoice in a complete revelation of the will of God, both *perceptive* and *providential*, so far as is necessary for them to know in order to their direction and comfort. For the gospel includes a discovery of the great events that shall befall the church of God to the end of the world.

2. It is a revelation which God hath made by his Son, the most excellent messenger that ever was sent into the world, far superior to all the ancient patriarchs and prophets by whom God communicated himself to his people in former times. And here we have an excellent account of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. *The glory of his office*, and that in three respects:

(1.) *God hath appointed him to be heir of all things.* As God he was equal to the Father, but as God-man and Mediator, he was appointed by the Father to be the heir of all things; that is, the sovereign Lord of all, the absolute disposer and director, and governor of all persons, and of all things, *Psal. ii. 6, 7. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, all judgment is committed to him.*

(2.) *By him God made the worlds*, both visible and invisible, the heavens and the earth, not as the instrumental cause, but as his essential word and wisdom: by him he made the *old creation*, and by him he makes the *new creature*, and by him he rules and governs both.

(3.) *He upholds all things by the word of his power*; he keeps the world from dissolving; *by him all things consist*; the weight of the whole creation is laid upon Christ, he supports the whole and all the parts. When upon the apostasy the world was breaking to pieces, under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, has bound it up again, and established it by his almighty power and goodness. None of the ancient prophets sustained such an office as this, none was sufficient for it.

2. From hence the apostle passes to the glory of the person of Christ, who was able to execute such an office; *he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, ver. 2. This is a high and lofty description of the glorious Redeemer, this is an account of his *personal excellency*.

1. He is in person the Son of God, the only begotten Son of God, and as such he must have the same nature. This *personal distinction* always supposes one and the same nature. Every son of man is man; were not the nature the same, the generation would be monstrous.

2. The person of the Son is the glory of the Father, shining forth with a truly divine splendour. As the beams are resplendent emanations of the sun, the Father and fountain of light, Jesus Christ in his person is God manifest in the flesh, he is the light of light, the true Shechinah.

3. The person of the Son is the true image and character of the person of the Father; being of the same nature, he must bear the same image and likeness. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father, for he hath the nature and perfections of God in him. *He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father*; that is, he hath seen the same being. He that hath known the Son, hath known the Father, John xiv. 7, 8, 9. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, the personal distinction is no other than will consist with essential union. This is the glory of the person of Christ, the fulness of the Godhead dwells not typically but really in him.

3. From the glory of the person of Christ, he proceeds to mention the glory of his grace, his condescension itself was truly glorious. The sufferings of Christ had this great honour in them, to be a full satisfaction for the sins of his people; *by himself he purged away our sins*; that is by the proper innate merit of his death and bloodshed, by their infinite intrinsic value, as they were the sufferings of himself, he has made an atonement for sin. Himself the glory of his person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit, as was a sufficient reparation of honour to God, who had suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men.

4. From the glory of his sufferings, we are at length led to consider the glory of his exaltation; when by himself he had purged away our sin, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, at his Father's right hand. As Mediator and Redeemer, he is invested with the highest honour, authority and activity for the good of his people; the Father now does all things by him, receives all the services of his people from him. Having assumed our nature, and suffered in it on earth, he has taken it up with him to heaven, and there it has the high honour to be next to God; and this was the reward of his humiliation.

Now it was by no less a person than this that God has in these last days spoken to men, and the dignity of the messenger gives authority and excellency to the message, and therefore the dispensation of the gospel must needs exceed, and very far exceed the dispensation of the law.

4. Being made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? 6. And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the

angels of God worship him. 7. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 8. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

The apostle having proved the pre-eminence of the gospel above the law, from the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ above the prophets, now proceeds to shew that he is not only much superior to the prophets but to the angels themselves. In this he obviates an objection that the Jewish zealots would be ready to make, that the law was not only delivered by men, but ordained by angels, *Gal. iii. 19.* That they attended at the giving forth of the law, the hosts of heaven were drawn forth to attend the Lord Jehovah on that awful occasion. Now the angels are very glorious beings, far more glorious and excellent than men; the scripture always represents them as the most excellent of all creatures, and we know of no being but God himself that is higher than the angels: and therefore that law that was ordained by angels ought to hold in great esteem.

To take off the force of this argument, the penman of this epistle proceeds to state the comparison between Jesus Christ and the holy angels, both in nature and office, and to prove that Christ is vastly superior to the angels themselves. *Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* Here observe.

1. The superior nature of Christ is proved from his superior name. The scripture does not give high and glorious titles without a real foundation and reason in nature, nor would such great things have been said of our Lord Jesus Christ, if he had not been as great and excellent as those words import. When it is said that Christ was made so much better than the angels are we are not to imagine that he was a mere creature as the angels are; the word *ὑψίστος*, when joined with an adjective, is no where to be rendered *created*, and here may very well be read *bring more excellent*, as the Syriac version hath it; we read *ὑψίστος ἐστὶς ἀληθής*, let God be true, not made so, but acknowledged to be so.

2. The superiority of the name and nature of Christ above the angels is declared in the holy scriptures, and to be deduced from thence. We should have known little or nothing either of Christ, or of the angels, without the scriptures; and we must therefore be determined by them in our conceptions of the one and the other.

Now here are several passages of scripture cited, in which those things are said of Christ that were never said of the angels.

1. It was said of Christ, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, *Psal. ii. 7.* which refers either to his eternal generation or to his resurrection, or to his solemn inauguration into his glorious kingdom at his ascension and session at the right hand of the Father. Now this was never said concerning the angels, and therefore by inheritance he has a more excellent nature and name than they.

2. It is said concerning Christ; but never concerning the angels, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*, taken from 2 Sam. vii. 14. Not only I am his Father, and he is my Son by nature and eternal promanation, but I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son by wonderful conception, and this his Sonship shall be the fountain and foundation of every gracious relation between me and fallen man.

3. It is said of Christ, *When God brings his First-begotten into the world, let all the angels of God worship him.* That is, either when he is brought into this lower world at his nativity, let the angels attend and honour him, or when he is brought into the world above at his ascension to enter upon his mediatorial kingdom, or when he shall bring him again into the world to judge the world, then let the highest creatures worship him. God will not suffer an angel to continue in heaven that will not be in subjection to Christ, and pay adoration to him, and he will at last make the fallen angels and wicked men to confess his divine power and authority, and to fall before him; they that would not have him to reign, must then be brought forth and slain before him. The proof of this is taken out of *Psal. cxxvii. 7. Worship him all ye gods*, that is, all ye that are superior to men, own yourselves to be inferior to Christ, in nature and power.

4. God hath said concerning Christ, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, &c. ver. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. But of the angels he hath only said, *that he hath made them spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*, ver. 7. Now, upon comparing what he here saith of the angels, with what he saith to Christ, the vast inferiority of the angels to Christ will plainly appear.

1. What doth God say here of the angels; *He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.* This we have in *Psal. civ. 4.* where it seems to be more immediately spoken of the winds and lightning, but is here applied to the angels, whose agency the divine Providence makes use of in the winds, and in thunder and lightning. Here, 1. *The office* of the angels; they are God's ministers, or servants to do his pleasure; it is the glory of God that he has such servants; it is yet more so that he does not need them. 2. How the angels are qualified for this service: he makes them spirits and a flame of fire, *i. e.* he endows them with light and zeal, with activity, and ability, readiness and resolution, to do his pleasure: they are no more than what God has made them to be, and they are servants to the Son as well as to the Father. But,

2. Observe, How much greater things are said of Christ by the Father. Here two passages of Scripture are quoted, one out of *Psal. xlv. 6, 7.* where God declares of Christ. 1. His true and real divinity, and that with much pleasure and affection, not grudging him that glory. *Thy Throne, O God. Here one person calls another person God, O God.* And if God the Father declares him to be so, he must be really and truly so; for God calls persons and things as they are. And now let who will deny him to be essentially God at their peril, but let us own and honour him as God; for if he had not been God, he had never been fit to have done the mediator's work, or to have worn the mediator's crown. 2. God declares the dignity and dominion as having a throne, a kingdom, and a sceptre of that kingdom. He has all right, rule, authority, and power, both as the God of nature, grace, and glory, and as Mediator; and so he is adequate and sufficient to all the intents and purposes of his mediatorial kingdom. 3. God declares the eternal duration of the dominion and dignity of Christ, founded upon the divinity of his person. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, from everlasting to everlasting, through all the ages of time, maugre all the attempts of earth and hell to undermine and overthrow it, and through all the endless ages of eternity, when time shall be no more. This distinguishes Christ's throne from all earthly thrones which are tottering and will at length tumble down; but the throne of Christ shall be as the days of heaven. 4. God declares of Christ the perfect equity of his administration, and of the execution of his power through all the parts of his government. *A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom*, ver. 8. He came righteously to the sceptre,

sceptre, and he uses it in perfect righteousness; and the righteousness of his government proceeds from the righteousness of his person, from an essential eternal love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity; not merely from considerations of prudence or interest, but from an inward and immovable principle; *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity*, ver. 9. Christ came to fulfil all righteousness to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and he was righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He has recommended righteousness to men, and restored it among them as a most excellent and amiable thing. He came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, as a hateful as well as hurtful thing. 5. God declares of Christ how he was qualified for the office of Mediator, and how he was installed and confirmed in it, ver. 9. *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

1. Christ hath the name *Messiah* from his being anointed. God's anointing of Christ signifies both his qualifying him for the office of the Mediator with the holy Spirit and all his graces, and likewise his inauguration of him into the office, as prophets, priests, and kings were by anointing. God, even thy God, imports the confirmation of Christ in the office of Mediator by the covenant of redemption and peace that was between the Father and the Son. God is the God of Christ, as Christ is man and Mediator.

2. The anointing of Christ was with the oil of gladness, which signifies both the gladness and cheerfulness with which Christ undertook and went through the office of Mediator, finding himself to be absolutely sufficient for it, and also that joy that was set before him as the reward of his service and sufferings; that crown of glory and gladness, he should wear for ever after the suffering of death.

3. This anointing of Christ was above the anointing of his fellows. God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Who are Christ's fellows? Has he any equals? Not as God, except the Father and Spirit, but these are not here meant. But as man he has his fellows, and as an anointed person; but his anointing is beyond all theirs.

1. Above the angels, who may be said to be his fellows, as they are the sons of God by creation, and God's messengers whom he employs in his service. 2. Above all prophets, priests, and kings that ever were anointed with oil, to be employed in the service of God on earth. 3. Above all the saints, who are his brethren, children of the same father, as he was a partaker with them of flesh and blood.

4. Above all those that were related to him as man, above all the house of David, all the tribe of Judah, all his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh. All God's other anointed ones had only the Spirit in a certain measure, Christ had the Spirit above measure, without any limitation. None therefore goes through his work as Christ did, none takes so much pleasure in it as Christ does; for he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

The other passage of scripture in which is the superior excellence of Christ to the angels, is taken out of *Psalms* cii. 25, 26, 27. and is thus recited here:

10. And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment: 12. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

In these verses the omnipotency of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared, as it appears both in creating the world, and in changing it.

1. In creating the world, ver. 10. *And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.* The Lord Christ had the original right to govern the world, because he made the world in the beginning; his right as mediator, was by commission, from the Father; his right as God with the Father was absolute, resulting from his creating power. This power he had before the beginning of the world, and he exerted it in giving a beginning and being to the world. He must therefore be no part of the world himself, for then he must give himself a beginning. He was *ante omnia*, before all things, and by him all things consist, *Col. i. 17.* Not only above all things in condition, but before all things in existence; and therefore must be God and self-existent. He laid the foundations of the earth, did not only introduce new forms into pre-existent matter, but made out of nothing the foundations of the earth, the *primordia rerum*; he not only founded the earth, but the heavens too are the work of his hands, both the habitation and the inhabitants, the hosts of heaven, the angels themselves, and therefore he must needs be infinitely superior to them.

2. In changing the world that he has made, and here the mutability of this world is brought in to illustrate the immutability of Christ.

1. This world is mutable, all created nature is so; this world has passed through many changes, and shall pass through more; all these changes are by the permission, and under the direction of Christ that made the world, ver. 11, 12. *They shall perish, they shall wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.* This our visible world, both the earth and visible heavens are growing old. Not only men and beasts and trees grow old, but this world itself grows old; and is hastening to its dissolution; it changes like a garment, has lost much of its beauty and strength; it grew old betimes on the first apostasy, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since; it bears the symptoms of a dying world. But then its dissolution shall not be its utter destruction but its change. Christ will fold up this world as a garment not to be abused any longer, not to be used any longer so as it has been. Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better; *We look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Let the consideration of this warn us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world, and let us wait on Christ to change us into a meetness for that new world that is approaching; we cannot enter into it till we be new creatures.

2. Christ is immutable. Thus the Father testifies of him. *Thou remainest, thy years shall not fail.* Christ is the same in himself, the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever, and the same to his people in all the changes of time. And this may well support all that have an interest in Christ under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they feel in themselves. Christ is immutable and immortal, his years shall not fail. This may comfort us under all decays of nature that we may observe in ourselves or in our friends, though our flesh and heart fail, and our days are hastening to an end. Christ lives to take care of us while we live, and of ours when we are gone, and this should quicken us all to make our interest in him clear and sure, that our spiritual and eternal life may be hid with Christ in God.

13. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool? 14. Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

This concludes the comparison between Christ and the angels, and the preference of Christ to them; God never said to the angels what he has said to Christ.

1. What hath God said to Christ? He hath said, *Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool*, *Psalms* cx. 1. i. e. receive thou glory, dominion, and rest, and remain in the administration of thy mediatorial kingdom until all thine enemies shall either be made thy friends by conversion, or thy footstool. Note, 1. Christ Jesus has his enemies, would one think it; enemies even among them; enemies to his sovereignty, to his cause, to his people; such as will not have him to reign over them. Let us not think it strange then if we have our enemies. Christ never did any thing to make men his enemies; he has done a great deal to make them all his friends and his Father's friends, and yet he has his enemies. 2. All the enemies of Christ shall be made his footstool, either by humble submission and entire subjection to his will, casting themselves down at his feet, or by utter destruction; he shall trample upon those that continue obstinate, and shall triumph over them. 3. God the Father hath undertaken for this, and he will see it done, yea, he will himself do it; and though it be not done presently it shall certainly be done, and Christ waits for it, and so must Christians wait till God has wrought all their works in them, for them and by them. 4. Christ shall go on to rule and reign till this is done; he shall not leave any of his great designs unfinished, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. And it becomes his people to go on in their duty, doing what he would have them be doing, what he would have them to do, avoiding what he would have them to avoid, bearing what he would have them to bear, till he makes them conquerors, and more than conquerors over all their spiritual enemies.

2. What hath God said of the angels? He never said to them as he said to Christ, *sit ye at my right hand*; but as he said of them here, *they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.* Note, 1. What the angels are as to their nature, they are spirits, i. e. without bodies or inclination to bodies, and yet they can assume bodies, and appear in them when God pleases. They are spirits incorporeal, intelligent, active substances, they excel in wisdom and strength. 2. What the angels are as to their office, they are ministering spirits. Christ as Mediator is the great minister of God in the great work of redemption. The holy Spirit is the great minister of God and Christ in the application of this redemption; angels are ministering spirits under the blessed Trinity to execute the divine will and pleasure, they are the ministers of divine providence. 3. The angels are sent forth for this end to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. Here observe, 1. The description given of the saints, *they are heirs of salvation*; at present they are under age, heirs, not inheritors. They are heirs, because they are the children of God: if children then heirs. Let us make sure that we are children by adoption and regeneration, having made a covenant-resignation of ourselves to God, and walking before him in a gospel conversation, and then we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. 2. The dignity and privilege of the saints, the angels are sent forth to minister for them. This they have done in attending and acting at the giving forth of the law, in fighting the battles of the saints, in destroying their enemies. They still minister for them in opposing the malice and power of evil spirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, pitching their tents about theirs, instructing, quickening, and comforting their souls under Christ and the Holy Ghost; and thus they shall do in gathering all the saints together at the last day. Bless God for the ministration of angels, keep in God's way and take the comfort of this promise, that he will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. *They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your feet against a stone*, *Psalms* xci. 11, 12.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter the apostle, 1. Makes some application of the doctrine laid down in the chapter foregoing, concerning the excellency of the person of Christ, both by way of exhortation and argument, ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. 2. Enlarges further upon the pre-eminence of Christ above the angels, ver. 5, 6, 7. 3. He proceeds to remove the scandal of the cross, ver. 10—16. 4. To insert the incarnation of Christ, taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and assigns the reason of his so doing, ver. 16. to the end.

1. THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward: 3. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The apostle proceeds in the plain, profitable method of doctrine, reason, and use, through this epistle. Here we have,

1. The application of the truths before asserted and proved; this is brought in by the allative particle *therefore*, with which this chapter begins, and which shews its connection with the former; where the apostle having proved Christ to be superior to the angels by whose ministry the law was given, and therefore that the gospel dispensation must be more excellent than the legal, he now comes to apply this doctrine both by way of exhortation and argument.

1. By way of exhortation, ver. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more diligent heed to the things which we have heard.* This is the first way by which we are to shew our esteem of Christ and of the gospel. It is the great concern of every one under the gospel to give the most earnest heed to all gospel discoveries, i. e. to prize them highly in our judgments as matters of the greatest importance; to hearken to them diligently in all the opportunities we have for that purpose; to read them frequently, to meditate on them closely, and to mix faith with them; to embrace them in our hearts and affections, to retain them in our memories, and finally to regulate our words and actions according to them.

2. By

2. By way of argument, he adds strong motives to enforce the exhortation. 1. From the great loss we shall sustain, if we do not take this earnest heed to things we have heard, *we shall let them slip*. They will leak and run out of our heads, lips, and lives, and we shall be great losers by our neglect. Learn, 1. That when we have received gospel truths into our minds we are in danger of letting them slip. Our minds and memories are like a leaking vessel, they do not without much care retain what is poured into them, this proceeds from the corruption of our natures, the enmity and subtlety of Satan, *he steals away the word*, from the entanglements and snares of the world, the *thorns that choke the good seed*. 2. That those meet with an inconceivable loss, who let gospel truths, which they had received slip out of their minds: they have lost a *treasure far better than thousands of gold and silver*; the seed is lost, their time and pains in hearing lost, and their hopes of a *good harvest* lost; all is lost if the gospel be lost. 3. This consideration should be a strong motive both to our attention to the gospel, and retention of it; and indeed if we do not well attend, so we shall not long retain the word of God: flighty hearers will soon be forgetful hearers. 2. Another argument is taken from that dreadful punishment we shall incur if we do not do this duty. A more dreadful punishment than those fell under who neglected and disobeyed the law, *ver. 2, 3, 4*. Here observe,

1. How the law is described: It was the *word spoken by angels, and declared to be stedfast*; It was the word *spoken by angels*, because given by the ministration of angels; the sounding the trumpet, and perhaps forming the words according to God's direction; and God as judge will make use of the angels to sound the trumpet a second time, and gather all to his tribunal to receive their sentence, as they have conformed or not conformed to the law. *And this law is declared to be stedfast*; it is like the promise, *yea and amen*; it is truth and faithfulness, and it will abide and have its force whether men obey it or no: *for every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompence of reward*. If men trifle with the law of God, the law will not trifle with them; it has taken hold of the sinners of former ages, and will take hold of them in all ages. God, as a righteous governor and judge, when he had given forth the law, would not let the contempt and breach of it go unpunished; but he has from time to time reckoned with the transgressors of it, and recompensed them according to the nature and aggravation of their disobedience. Observe, The severest punishment God ever inflicted upon sinners is no more than what sin deserves; it is a *just recompence and reward*; punishments are as just and as much due to sin as rewards are to obedience, yea more due than rewards are to imperfect obedience.

2. How the gospel is described. *It is salvation, a great salvation, so great salvation* that no other salvation can compare with it; so great that none can fully express, no, nor yet conceive how great it is. It is a great salvation that the gospel discovers, for it discovers a great Saviour, one that has manifested God to be reconciled to our nature, and reconcilable to our persons; It shows how we may be saved from *so great sin and so great misery*, and be restored to *so great holiness and so great happiness*. The gospel discovers to us a great Sanctifier, to qualify us for salvation, and to bring us to the Saviour; the gospel unfolds a *great and excellent dispensation of grace*, a new covenant; the great charter, deed, and instrument, is settled and secured to all those that come into the bond of the covenant.

3. How sinning against the gospel is described. It is declared to be a *neglect of this great salvation*, it is a contempt put upon the saving grace of God in Christ, *making light of it*, not caring for it, not thinking it worth their while to acquaint themselves with it, not regarding either the worth of gospel grace, or their own want of it, and undone state without it; not using their endeavours to discern the truth of it, of assent to it, nor to discern the goodness of it, so as to approve of it, or apply it to themselves. In these things they discover a plain neglect of this great salvation. Let us all take heed that we be not found among those wicked, wretched sinners that neglect the grace of the gospel.

4. How the misery of such sinners is described: and it is declared to be unavoidable, *ver. 3*. *How shall we escape?* This intimates, 1. That the despisers of this salvation are condemned already. So they were by the sin of Adam; and they have strengthened their bonds by their personal transgressions, *John iii. 18*. *He that believeth not is condemned already*. There is no escaping out of this condemned state, but by escaping the great salvation discovered in the gospel; as for those that neglect it, the wrath of God is upon them, and it abides upon them; they cannot disengage themselves, they cannot emerge, they cannot get from under the curse. 3. That there is a yet more aggravated curse and condemnation waiting for all those that despise the grace of God in Christ, and that most heavy curse they cannot escape: they can neither *conceal their person at the great day nor deny the fact*, nor *bribe the judge*, nor *break the prison*. There is no door of mercy left open for them, there shall be no more sacrifice for sin, they are irrecoverably lost. The unavoidableness of the misery of such is here expressed by way of question, *How shall we escape?* It is an appeal to universal reason, to the consciences of sinners themselves: it is a challenge to all their power and policy, to all their interest and alliances, whether they, or any of them, can find out or can force out a way of escape from the vindictive justice and wrath of God. It intimates, that the neglectors of this great salvation will be left not only *without power*, but *without plea and excuse*, at the judgment-day, if they be asked what they have to say that the sentence should not be executed upon them; they will be speechless, and self-condemned by their own consciences, even to a greater degree of misery than those fell under that neglected the authority of the law, or that sinned without the law.

3. Another argument to enforce the exhortation is taken from the *dignity and excellency of the person* by whom the gospel began to be spoken, *ver. 3*. *It began at first to be spoken by the Lord*, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah, the Lord of life and glory, Lord of all, and as such possessed of unerring and infallible wisdom, infinite and inexhaustible goodness, unquestionable and unchangeable veracity and faithfulness, absolute sovereignty and authority and irresistible power. This great Lord of all was the first that began to speak it *plainly and clearly, without types and shadows*, as it was before he came. Now surely it may be expected that *all will reverence this Lord*, and take heed to a gospel that began to be spoken by one that *spoke so as never man spoke*.

Another argument is taken from the character of those that were witnesses to Christ and the gospel, *ver. 3, 4*. *It was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness*. Observe, 1. The promulgation of the gospel was continued and confirmed by those that heard Christ, by the evangelists and apostles, who were eye and ear witnesses of what Jesus Christ began both to do and to teach, *Acts i. 1*. These witnesses could have no worldly end or interest of their own to serve hereby. Nothing could induce them to give in their evidence, but the Redeemer's glory, and their own and others salvation; they exposed themselves by their testimony to the loss of all that was dear to them in this life, and many of them sealed it with their blood. 2. *God himself bore witness to that were witnesses for Christ*; he testified that they were authorised and sent by him to preach Christ and salvation by him to the world. And how did he bear them witness? Not only by giving them great peace in their own minds, great

patience under all their sufferings, and unspeakable courage and joy; though these were witnesses to themselves: but he bore them witness *by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will*. 1. *With signs*; Signs of his gracious presence with them, and of his power working by them. 2. *Wonders*: Works quite beyond the power of nature, and admiration stirring them up to attend to the doctrine preached, and to enquire into it. 3. *Divers miracles*, or mighty works, in which an almighty agency did appear beyond all reasonable controversy. 3. *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, qualifying, enabling, and exciting them to do the work to which they were called; *divisions or distributions of the Holy Ghost, diversities of gifts*, 1 Cor. xii. 4, &c. and all this *according to God's own will*; It was the will of God that we should have *sure footing* for our faith, and a *strong foundation* for our hope in receiving the gospel. As at the giving forth of the law there were signs and wonders by which God testified the authority, and excellency of it; so he witnessed to the gospel by more and greater miracles, as to a more excellent and abiding dispensation.

5. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. 6. But one in a certain place testified, saying, what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him? 7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. 8. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

The apostle having made this serious application of the doctrine of the personal excellency of Christ above the angels, he now returns to that pleasant subject again, and pursues it farther, *ver. 5*. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak*. 1. Here the apostle lays down a negative proposition, including a positive one, that the state of the gospel church, which is here called *the world to come*, is not subject to the angels, but is under the special care and direction of the Redeemer himself. Neither the state in which the church is at present, nor that more completely restored state to which it shall arrive when the prince of this world is cast out, and the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of Christ, is left to the government of the angels; but Jesus Christ will take to him *his great power, and will reign*. He does not make that use of the ministration of angels, to give the gospel as he did the law, which was the state of the old or antiquated world. This new world is committed to Christ, and only put in absolute subjection to him in all his spiritual and eternal concerns. Christ was the administration of the gospel church, what at once speaks Christ's honour, and the church's happiness and safety. It is certain, that neither the first creation of the gospel church, nor its after edification or administration, nor its final judgment and perfection, are committed to the angels, but to Christ. God would not put *so great a trust in his holy ones*: his angels were too weak for such a charge. 2. We have a scripture account of that blessed Jesus to whom the gospel world is put into subjection. It is taken from *Psal. viii. 4, 5, 6, 7*. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?* &c. These words are to be considered both as applicable to mankind in general, and as applied here to the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. *As applicable to mankind in general*, where we have an affectionate, thankful, expostulation with the great God concerning his wonderful condescension and kindness to the sons of men. 1. In remembering them or being mindful of them, when yet they had no being but in the councils of divine love. The favours of God to men all spring up out of his eternal thoughts and purposes of mercy for them; as all our dutiful regards to God spring forth from our remembrance of him. God is always mindful of us, let us never be forgetful of him. 2. In visiting him. God's purpose of favours for men is productive of gracious visits to them; he comes to see us, how it is with us, what we ail, what we want, what dangers we are exposed to, what difficulties we have to encounter; and by his visitation our spirit is preserved. Let us so remember God, as daily to approach him in a way of duty. 4. In making him the head of all the creatures in this lower world, the top-stone of his building, the chief of the *ways of God on earth*, and only a *little lower than the angels* in place and respect to the body while here, and to be made like the angels, and *equal to the angels at the resurrection of the just*, Lam. xx. 36. In crowning him with glory and honour, the honour of having noble powers and faculties of soul, excellent organs and parts of body; whereby he is allied to both worlds, and capable of enjoying the happiness of both. 5. In giving him right to, and dominion over, the inferior creatures, which did continue so long as he continued in his allegiance and duty to God.

2. This is hereby plainly applied to our Lord Jesus Christ; and the whole that is here said can only be applied to him, *ver. 8, 9*. And here you may observe, 1. What is the moving cause of all the kindness God shews to men in giving Christ for them and to them; and *that is the grace of God*; For what is man? 2. What are the fruits of this free grace of God with respect to the gift of Christ for us and to us, as related in this scripture testimony. 1. That God was mindful of Christ for us in the covenant of redemption. 2. That God visited Christ on our account; and it was concluded between them that in the fulness of time Christ should come into the world as the great archetypal sacrifice. 3. That God had made him a little lower than the angels, in his *being made man*, that he might suffer and humble himself to death. 4. That God crowned the *human nature of Christ with glory and honour*, in his being perfectly holy, and having the *Spirit without measure*, and by an ineffable union with the divine nature in the second person of the Trinity, *the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily*, that by his sufferings he might make satisfaction, *tasting death for every one*; i. e. sensibly feeling and undergoing the bitter agonies of that shameful, painful, and cursed death of the cross; hereby putting all mankind into a new state of trial. 5. That as a reward for his humiliation in suffering death, he was *crowned with glory and honour*, advanced to the highest dignity in heaven, and having absolute dominion over all things; thus accomplishing that ancient scripture in Christ which was never so accomplished or fulfilled in any mere man that ever was upon earth. And now, having mentioned the death of Christ, the apostle proceeds.

10. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory,

glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. 12. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of thy church will I sing praise unto thee. 13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.

To prevent and remove the scandal of the cross; and this he does by shewing both how it became God that Christ should suffer, and how much man should be benefitted by those sufferings.

1. How it became God that Christ should suffer, ver. 10. *For it became him, for whom are all things, and to whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* Where, 1. God is described as the final end and first cause of all things, and as such it became him to secure his own glory in all that he did, not only to act so as that he might in nothing dishonour himself, but that he might from every thing have a revenue of glory. 2. He is declared to have acted up to this glorious character in the work of redemption, and that both as to the choice of the end and means.

1. In the choice of the end, and that was to bring many sons to glory, to present glory in enjoying the glorious privileges of the gospel, and to future glory in heaven, which will be glory indeed, an exceeding eternal weight of glory.

Here observe, 1. That we must be the sons of God both by adoption and regeneration, before we can be brought to the glory of heaven. Heaven is the inheritance, and only those that are the children are heirs of that inheritance. 2. All true believers are the children of God; to them that receive Christ, he has granted the power and privilege of being the children of God, even to as many as believe on his name, John i. 12. 3. That though the sons of God are but a few in one place, and at one time; yet when they shall be all brought together, it will appear that they are many. Christ is the first-born among many brethren. 4. That all the sons of God, how many soever they are, or however dispersed and divided, shall at length be brought together to glory.

2. In the choice of the means. 1. In finding out such a person as should be the captain of our salvation; those that are saved must come to that salvation under the conduct of a captain and leader sufficient for that purpose; and they must be all lifted under the banner of this captain; they must endure hardships as good soldiers of Christ; they must follow their captain, and they that do so shall be brought safely off, and shall inherit great glory and honour. 2. In making this captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. God the Father made the Lord Jesus Christ the captain of our salvation; that is, he consecrated, he appointed him to that office, he gave him a commission for it, and he made him a perfect captain; he had perfection of wisdom and courage, and strength by the Spirit of the Lord, which he had without measure: he was made perfect through sufferings; that is, he perfected the work of our redemption by shedding his blood, and was thereby perfectly qualified to be a Mediator between God and man: He found his way to the crown by the cross, and so must his people too. The excellent Dr. Owen observes, that the Lord Christ being consecrated and perfected through suffering, hath consecrated the way of suffering for all his followers to pass through unto glory; and hereby their sufferings are made necessary and unavoidable, they are hereby made honourable, useful, and profitable.

2. He shews how much they would be benefitted by the cross and sufferings of Christ; as there was nothing unbecoming God and Christ, so there was that which would be very beneficial to men in these sufferings. Hereby they are brought into a near union with Christ, and into a very endearing relation.

1. In a near union, ver. 11. *Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.* Observe, Christ is he that sanctifieth, he that purchased and sent the sanctifying Spirit: He is the head of all sanctifying influences. The Spirit sanctifieth on the Spirit of Christ. True believers are they who are sanctified, endowed with holy principles and powers separated and set apart from mean and vile uses, to high and holy uses and purposes; for so they must be before they can be brought to glory. Now Christ, that is the agent in this work of sanctification, and Christians that are the recipient subjects, are all of one. How? Why, 1. They are all of one heavenly Father, and that is God. God is the Father of Christ by eternal generation, and by miraculous conception, &c. of Christians by adoption and regeneration. 2. They are of one earthly Father, Adam. Christ and believers have the same human nature. 3. Of one Spirit, holy and heavenly disposition; the same mind is in them that was in Christ, though not in the same measure; the same Spirit informs and actuates the head and all the members.

2. Into an endearing relation. This results from the union: And here first he declares what this relation is, and then he quotes three texts out of the Old Testament to illustrate and prove it.

1. He declares what this relation is; he and believers being all of one; he therefore is not ashamed to call them brethren. Observe, 1. Christ and believers are brethren; not only bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, but spirit of his Spirit, brethren by the whole blood, in what is heavenly, as well as what is earthly. 2. Christ is not ashamed to own his relation; he is not ashamed to call them brethren, which is wonderful goodness and condescension in him, considering their meanness by nature, and vileness by sin; but he will never be ashamed of any that are not ashamed of him, and take care not to be a shame and a reproach to him and to themselves.

2. He illustrates this from three texts of scripture. The first is out of Psalm xxii. 22. *I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee.* This psalm was an eminent prophecy of Christ; it begins with his words on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Now here it is foretold, 1. That Christ should have a church or congregation in the world, a company of volunteers, freely willing to follow him. 2. That these should not only be brethren to one another, but to Christ himself.

3. That he would declare his Father's name to them; that is, his nature, attributes, his mind and will: And this he did in his own person while he dwelt among us, and by his Spirit poured out upon his disciples, enabling them to spread the knowledge of God in the world from one generation to another, to the end of the world.

4. That Christ would sing praise to his Father in the church. The glory of the Father was what Christ had in his eye; his heart was set upon it, and he laid out himself for it, and he would have his people join with him in it.

The second scripture is quoted from Psalm xviii. 2. *And again, I will put my trust in him.* That Psalm sets forth the troubles that David, as a type of Christ, met with, and how he in all his troubles put his trust in God. Now this shews, that besides his divine nature, which needed no supports, he was to take another nature upon him, that would want those supports that none but God could give. He suffered and trusted as our head and president. Owen in locum. His brethren must suffer and trust too.

The third scripture is taken from Isa. viii. 18. *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me:* This proves Christ really and truly man, for parents and children are of the same nature with Christ; children were given him of the Father in the counsel of his eternal love, and that covenant of peace that was between them. And they are given to Christ at their conversion. When they take hold of his covenant, then Christ receives them, rules over them, rejoices in them; perfects all their affairs, takes them up to heaven, and there presents them to his Father, *Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me.*

14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. 16. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 17. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: 18. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Here the apostle proceeds to assert the incarnation of Christ, as taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and he shews the reason and design of his so doing.

1. The incarnation of Christ is asserted, ver. 16. *Verily he took upon him not the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham.* He took part of flesh and blood, though as God he pre-existed from all eternity; yet in fulness of time he took our nature into union with his divine nature, and became really and truly man. He did not lay hold of angels, but he laid hold of the seed of Abraham. The angels fell, and he let them go, and lie under the desert, defilement and dominion of their sin, without hope or help. Christ never designed to be the Saviour of the fallen angels; as their tree fell so it lies, and must lie to eternity, and therefore he did not assume their nature: the nature of angels could not be an atoning sacrifice for the sin of man. Now Christ resolving to recover the seed of Abraham, and raise them up from their fallen state, he took upon him the human nature from one descended from the loins of Abraham, that the same nature that had sinned might suffer, to restore human nature to a state of hope and trial; and all that accepted of mercy to a state of special favour and salvation. Now there is hope and help for the chief of sinners in and through Christ. Here is a price paid sufficient for all, and suitable to all, for it was in our nature. Let us all then know the day of our gracious visitation, and improve that distinguishing mercy which has been shewn to fallen men, not to the fallen angels.

2. The reasons and designs of the incarnation of Christ are declared, 1. *Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he must take part of the same, and be made like his brethren,* ver. 14. 15. For no higher nor lower nature than man's that had sinned, could so suffer the sin of man as to satisfy the justice of God, and raise up man to a state of hope, and make believers the children of God, and so brethren to Christ. 2. *He became man, that he might die;* as God he could not die, and therefore he assumes another nature and state. Here the wonderful love of God appeared, that when Christ knew what he must suffer in our nature, and how he must die in it, yet he so readily took it upon him. The legal sacrifices and offerings God could not accept as a propitiation; a body was prepared for Christ, and he said, *Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will.* 3. *That through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil,* ver. 14. The devil was the first sinner, and the first tempter to sin, and sin was the procuring cause of death; and he may be said to have the power of death, as he draws men into sin, the ways whereof are death, and as he is often permitted to terrify the consciences of men with the fear of death, and as he is the executioner of divine justice, nailing their souls from their bodies to the tribunal of God, there to receive their doom; and then being their tormentor, as he was before their tempter; in these respects he may be said to have had the power of death.

But now Christ has so far destroyed him that had the power of death, that he can keep none under the power of spiritual death; nor can he draw any into sin (the procuring cause of death), nor require the soul of any from the body, nor execute the sentence upon any, but who choose and continue to be his willing slaves, and persist in their enmity to God. 4. *That he might deliver his own people from that slavish fear of death that they are often subject to.* This may refer to the Old Testament saints, who were more under a spirit of bondage, because life and immortality were not so fully brought to light as now they are by the gospel; Or it may refer to all the people of God, whether under the Old Testament or the New, whose minds are often in perplexing fears about death and eternity. Christ became man, and died to deliver them from those perplexities of soul, by letting them know, that death is not only a conquered enemy but a reconciled friend, not sent to hurt the soul, or separate it from the love of God, but to put an end to all their grievances and complaints, and to give them a passage to eternal life and blessedness. That death now to them is not in the hand of Satan but in the hand of Christ; not Satan's servant but Christ's servant, has not hell following it, but heaven to all that all that are in Christ. 5. Christ must be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to the justice and honour of God, and to the support and comfort of his people. He must be faithful to God, and merciful to men.

1. In things pertaining to God, to his justice, and to his honour; to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, to make all the attributes of the divine nature, and all the persons subsisting therein harmonize in man's discovery, and fully reconcile God and man. Observe, 1. There was a great breach and quarrel between God and man by reason of sin. 2. Christ, by becoming man and dying, hath taken up the quarrel, and made reconciliation so far, as that God is ready to receive all into favour and friendship that come to him through Christ.

2. In things pertaining to his people, to their support and comfort, ver.

18. In that he suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. Where observe, 1. Christ's passion, he suffered being tempted and his temptations were not the least part of his sufferings, he was in all things tempted as we are yet without sin, chap. iv. 15. 2. Christ's compassion; he is able to succour them that are tempted. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a sympathizing physician, tender and skillful; he knows how to deal with tempted, sorrowful souls, because he has been himself sick of the same disease, not of sin, but of temptation and trouble of soul: The remembrance of his own sorrows and temptations makes him mindful of the trials of his people, and ready to help them. Here observe, the best of Christians are subject to temptations, to many temptations while in this world; let us never count upon an absolute freedom from such distress and danger as to need support and succour. 3. That Christ is ready and willing to succour those that under their temptations apply themselves to him, and that he became man, and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to succour his people.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter the apostle applies to what he had said in the chapter foregoing concerning the priesthood of Christ. 1. In a serious pathetic exhortation, that this great high-priest that was discovered to them, might be seriously considered by them, ver. 1—7. and then adds many weighty counsels and cautions from ver. 7. to the end.

1. **WHEREFORE**, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2. Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. 3. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. 4. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. 5. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; 6. But Christ as a Son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

In these verses we have the application to that doctrine laid down in the close of the last chapter concerning the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And observe,

1. In how fervent and affectionate a manner the apostle exhorts Christians to have this high-priest much in their thoughts, and to make him the object of their close and serious consideration; and surely no one in earth or heaven deserves our consideration more than he: That this exhortation might be made the more effectual, observe,

1. The honourable compellation used of those to whom he wrote. Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. 1. Brethren, not only my brethren, but the brethren of Christ, and in him brethren to all the saints, all the people of God are brethren, and should love and live like brethren. 2. Holy brethren, holy not only in profession and title, but in principle and practice, in heart and life. This has been turned by some into scorn; these, say they, are the holy brethren, but it is dangerous jesting with such edge-tools; he not mockers, lest your hands be made strong; let those that are thus despised and scorned labour to be holy brethren indeed, and approve themselves so to God; and they need not be ashamed of the title, nor value the scoffs of the profane. The day is coming when those that make this a term of reproach would count it their greatest honour and happiness to be taken into this sacred brotherhood. 3. Partakers of the heavenly calling, partakers of the means of grace, and of the Spirit of grace that came from heaven, and by which Christians are effectually called out of darkness into marvellous light; that calling that brings down heaven into the souls of men, and raises them up to a heavenly temper and conversation, and prepares them to live for ever with God in heaven.

2. The title he gives to Christ, whom he would have them consider. As first,

1. As the apostle of our profession, the prime minister of the gospel church, a messenger, and a principal messenger sent of God to men upon the most important errand, the great revealer of that faith which we profess to hold, and of that hope which we profess to have. 2. Not only the apostle, but the high priest too of our profession, the chief officer of the Old Testament as well as the New, the head of the church in every state, and under each dispensation, upon whose satisfaction and intercession we profess to depend for pardon of sin, and acceptance with God. 3. As Christ the Messiah anointed and every way qualified for the office of both apostle and high-priest. 4. As Jesus our Saviour, our healer, the great physician of souls, typified by the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to him and be saved.

2. We have the duty we owe to him who bears all these high and honourable titles, and that is to consider them as thus characterized. Consider what he is in himself, and what he is to us, and what he will be to us, hereafter and for ever; consider him, fix your thoughts upon him with the greatest attention, and act towards him accordingly, look unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith. Here observe, 1. Many that profess faith in Christ have not a due consideration for him, he is not so much thought of as he deserves to be, and desires to be, by those that expect salvation from him. 2. Close and serious consideration of Christ would be of great advantage to us to increase our acquaintance with, and to engage our love and our obedience to him, and reliance on him. 3. Even those that are holy brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling, have need to stir up one another to think more of Christ than they do, to have him more in their minds; the best of his people think too seldom and too slightly of him. 4. We must consider Christ as he is described to us in the scriptures, and form our apprehensions of him from thence, not from any vain conceptions and fancies of our own.

3. We have several arguments drawn up to enforce this duty of considering Christ the apostle and high-priest of our profession. The first is taken from his fidelity, ver. 2. He was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was in all his house. 1. Christ is an anointed Mediator, God the Father hath sent and sealed him to that office, and therefore his mediation is acceptable to the Father. 2. He is faithful to that appointment, punctually observing all the rules and orders of his mediation, and fully executing the trust reposed in him by his Father and by his people. 3. That he is as faithful to him that hath appointed him, as Moses was in all his house.

Moses was faithful in the discharge of his office to the Jewish church in the Old Testament, and so is Christ under the New; this was a proper argument to urge upon the Jews, who had so high an opinion of the faithfulness of Moses, and yet his faithfulness was but typical of Christ's. 2. Another argument is taken from the superior glory and excellence of Christ above Moses, ver. 3, 4, 5, 6, therefore they were more obliged to consider Christ. 1. Christ was a maker of the house, Moses but a member in it. By the house we are to understand the church of God, i.e. the people of God incorporated together under Christ their maker and head, and under subordinate officers, according to his law, observing his institutions; Christ is the maker of this house of the church in all ages, Moses was a minister in the house, he was instrumental under Christ in governing and edifying the house, but Christ is the maker of all things; for he is God, and one no less than God could build the church, either lay the foundation, or carry on the superstructure. No less power was requisite to make the church than to make the world; the world was made out of nothing, the church made out of materials altogether unfit for such a building. Christ, who is God, drew the platform of the church, provided the materials, and by almighty power disposed them to receive the form; he has compacted and united this his house, and has settled the orders of it; and crowned all with his own presence, which is the true glory of this house of God. 2. Christ was the master of this house, as well as the maker, ver. 5, 6. This house is styled his house as the Son of God. Moses was only a faithful servant for a testimony of those things that were to be spoken after Christ; as the eternal Son of God is the rightful owner and sovereign ruler of the church, Moses was only a typical governor for a testimony of all those things relating to the church, which would be more clearly, completely, and comfortably revealed in the gospel by the Spirit of Christ; and therefore Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses, and of greater regard and consideration; this argument the apostle concludes, 1. With a comfortable accommodation of it to himself and all true believers: ver. 6. whose house we are: Each of us personally, as we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and Christ dwells in us by faith; all of us jointly, as we are united by the bonds of graces, truths, ordinances, gospel discipline and devotions. 2. With a characteristic description of those persons that constitute this house: *if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*, i.e. if we maintain a bold and open profession of the truths of the gospel, upon which our hopes of grace and glory are built, and live upon and up to those hopes, so as to have a holy rejoicing in them, which shall abide firm to the end, notwithstanding all that we may meet with in so doing. So that you see there must not only be a setting out well in the ways of Christ, but a steadfastness and perseverance therein unto the end. We have here a direction what those must do that would partake of the dignity and privileges of the household of Christ. 1. They must take the truths of the gospel into their heads and hearts. 2. They must build their hopes of happiness upon those truths. 3. They must make an open profession of those truths. 4. They must live so up to them as to keep their evidences clear, and may rejoice in hope, and then they must in all persevere to the end. In a word, they must walk closely, comfortably, courageously, and constantly in the faith and practice of the gospel, that the master when he comes may own and approve them.

7. Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, 8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. 11. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13. But exhort one another daily while it is called, To-day: lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; 15. While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16. For some when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17. But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?* 18. And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? 19. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Here the apostle proceeds, pressing upon them serious counsels and cautions to the close of the chapter; and he recites a passage out of *Psalms* xcv. 7. &c. where observe,

(1.) What he counsels them to do, and that is, to give a speedy and present attention to the call of Christ. Hear his voice, assent to, approve of, and consider what God in Christ speaks unto you; and apply it to yourselves with suitable affections and endeavours, and set about it this very day, for to-morrow it may be too late. (2.) What he cautions them against, viz. hardening their hearts, turning the deaf ear to the calls and counsels of Christ: when he tells you of the evil of sin, the excellency of holiness, the necessity of receiving him by faith as our Saviour, do not shut your ear and heart against such a voice as this. (3.) Whose example he warns them by, even that of the Israelites their fathers, in the wilderness, as in the provocation and day of temptation; this refers to that remarkable passage at Massah Meribah, *Exod. xvii. ver. 2—7*. Observe,

1. Days of temptation are often days of provocation. 2. That to provoke God when he is trying us, and letting us see that we entirely depend, and immediately live upon him, is a provocation with a witness. 3. That our hardening our hearts is the spring of all our other sins. 4. That the sins of others, especially our relations, should be a warning to us. Our fathers' sins and punishments should be remembered by us, deter us from following their evil examples. Now as to the sin of the fathers of the Jews here reflected upon, observe, 1. The state in which these fathers were when they thus sinned; they were in the wilderness, brought out of Egypt, but not got into Canaan, the thoughts whereof should have restrained them from sin. 2. The sin they were guilty of: They tempted and provoked God; they

they distrusted God, and murmured against Moses, and would not attend to the voice of God. 3. The aggravations of their sin: They sinned in the wilderness, where they had a more immediate dependence upon God; they sinned when God was trying them: they sinned when they saw his works; works of wonder wrought for their deliverance out of Egypt, and their support and supply in the wilderness from day to day. They continued thus to sin against God forty years. These were heinous aggravations. 4. The source and spring of such aggravated sins, which were, 1. They erred in their hearts; and these heart-errors produced many other errors in their lips and lives. 2. They did not know God's ways, though he had walked before them; they did not know his ways, neither those ways of his providence in which he had walked towards them, nor those ways of his precept in which they ought to have walked towards God; they did not observe either his providences or his ordinances in a right manner. 5. The just and great resentment God had at their sins, and yet the great patience he exercised towards them, ver. 10. *Wherefore I am grieved with that generation, &c.* Note, 1. All sin, especially sin committed by God's professing privileged people, does not only anger and affront God, but it grieves him. 2. God is loth to destroy his people in or for their sin, he waits long to be gracious to them. 3. God keeps an exact account of the time that people go on sinning against him, and in grieving him by their sins; but at length, if they by their sins continue to grieve the Spirit of God, their sins shall be made grievous to their own spirits, either in a way of judgment or mercy. 6. The irreversible doom passed upon them at last for their sins. God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; either the rest of an earthly or heavenly Canaan. Observe, 1. Sin long continued in will kindle the divine wrath and make it flame out against sinners. 2. That God's wrath will discover itself in its righteous resolution to destroy the impenitent; he will swear in his wrath, not rashly but righteously, and his wrath will make their condition a restless condition; there is no resting under the wrath of God. (4.) What use the apostle makes of their awful example, ver. 12, 13, &c. He gives the Hebrews a proper caution, and enforces it with an affectionate compellation.

1. He gives the Hebrews a proper caution; the word is *take heed, προσέχετε*, look to it; look about you; be upon your guard against enemies both within and without; be circumspect: you see what kept many of your forefathers out of Canaan, and made their carcases fall in the wilderness; take heed lest you fall into the same sin and snare, and dreadful sentence. For you see Christ is head of the church, a much greater person than Moses, and your contempt of him must be a greater sin than their contempt of Moses; and so you are in danger of falling under a severer sentence than they. Observe, The ruin of others should be warnings to us to take heed of the rock they split upon; Israel's fall should for ever be a warning to all that come after them; for *all these things happened to them for ensamples*, 1 Cor. x. 11, and should be remembered by us. Take heed; all that would get safe to heaven must look about them.

2. He enforces the admonition with an affectionate compellation: *Brethren*, not only in the flesh but in the Lord; brethren whom I love and for whose welfare I labour and long. And here he enlarges upon the matter of the admonition; *take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* Where observe, 1. That an heart of unbelief is an evil heart; Unbelief is a great sin, it vitiates the heart of man. 2. That an evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from God; it is a leading step to apostasy; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert him. 3. That Christian brethren have need to be cautioned against apostasy. *Let them that think they stand, take heed lest they fall.*

3. He subjoins good counsel to the caution, and advises them to that which would be a remedy against this evil heart of unbelief, viz. that they would *exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day*, ver. 13. Observe, 1. We should be doing all the good we can to one another while we are together, which will be but a short and uncertain time. 2. Since to-morrow is none of ours, we must make the best improvement of this day. 3. If Christians do not exhort one another daily, they will be in danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Note, 1. There is a great deal of deceitfulness in sin, it appears fair but is filthy; it appears pleasant but is pernicious; it promises much but performs nothing. 2. The deceitfulness of sin is of a hardening nature to the soul; one sin allowed prepares for another; every act of sin confirms the habit: sinning against conscience is the way to sear the conscience; and therefore it should be the great concern of every one to exhort himself and others to beware of sin.

4. He comforts those that not only set out well, but hold on well, and hold out to the end, ver. 14. *We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end.* Note observe, 1. The saints privilege: they are made partakers of Christ, that is, of the spirit, nature, graces, righteousness, and life of Christ; they are interested in all that is Christ's, in all that he is, in all that he has done or can do. 2. The condition on which they hold that privilege, and that is, their perseverance in the bold and open profession and practice of Christ and Christianity unto the end. Not but they shall persevere, being kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation, but to be pressed thus to it, is one means by which Christ helps his people to persevere. This tends to make them watchful and diligent, and so keeps them from apostasy. Here observe, 1. The same spirit with which Christians set out in the ways of God, they should maintain and evidence to the end. They that begin seriously, and with lively affections, and holy resolutions, and humble renance, should go on in the same spirit. But, 2. There are a great many who in the beginning of their profession show a great deal of courage and confidence, but do not hold it fast to the end. 3. Perseverance in faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith.

5. The apostle resumes what he had before quoted from *Psalms* xcv. 7, &c. and he applies it close to those of that generation, ver. 15, 16, &c. while it is said, *To-day if ye will hear, &c.* as if he should say, what was recited before from that scripture belonged not only to former ages, but to you now, and to all that shall come after you; that you take heed you fall not into the same sins, lest you fall under the same condemnation. The apostle tells them, that though some who had heard the voice of God did provoke him, yet all did not so. Observe, 1. Though the greatest part of hearers provoked God by unbelief, yet some there were that believed the report. 2. That though the hearing of the word be the ordinary means of salvation, yet if it be not hearkened to, it will expose men more to the anger of God. 3. God will have a remnant that shall be obedient to his voice, and he will take care of such, and make mention of them with honour. 4. That if these should fall in a common calamity, yet they shall partake of eternal salvation, while disobedient hearers perish for ever.

6. And lastly, The apostle puts some queries upon what had been before mentioned, and gives proper answers to them, ver. 17, 18, 19. But with whom was he grieved forty years? With them that sinned. And to whom did he swear? &c. From whence observe, 1. That God is only grieved with those of his people that sin against him, and continue in sin. 2. That God is grieved and provoked most by sins publicly committed by the generality of a nation: when sin becomes epidemical, it is most provoking. 3.

That God grieves long, and bears long when pressed with the weight of general and prevailing wickedness, yet he will at length ease himself of public offenders by public judgment. 4. That unbelief (and rebellion which is the consequent of it) is the great damning sin of the world, especially of those that have a revelation of the mind and will of God. This sin shuts up the heart of God, and shuts up the gate of heaven against them; it lays them under the wrath and curse of God, and leaves them there; so that in truth and justice to himself he is obliged to cast them off for ever.

C H A P. IV.

The apostle having, in the chapter foregoing, set forth the sin and punishment of the ancient Jews, proceeds in this, 1. To declare that our privileges by Christ under the gospel exceed the privileges of the Jewish church under Moses, as a reason why we should make a right improvement of them, ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. 2. Assigns the cause why the ancient Hebrews did not profit by their religious privileges, ver. 2. Then 3. Confirms the privileges of those that believe, and the misery of those that continue in unbelief, ver. 3—10. Then, 4. Concludes with proper and powerful arguments and motives to faith and obedience.

1. **L**ET us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. 3. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. 5. And in this place again. If they shall enter into my rest. 6. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: 7. (Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 8. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.)

Here 1. The apostle declares that our privileges by Christ under the gospel are not only as great, but greater than those enjoyed under the Mosaic law. And he instances in this, that we have a promise left us of entering into his rest; that is, of entering into a covenant-relation to Christ, and a state of communion with God through Christ, and of growing up therein, till we are made perfect in glory. We have discoveries of this rest and prophecies, and the best directions how we may attain unto it. This promise of spiritual rest is a promise left us by the Lord Jesus Christ in his last will and testament as a precious legacy. Our business is to see to it, that we be the legatees; that we lay our claim to that rest and freedom from the dominion of sin, Satan, and the flesh, by which the souls of men are kept in servitude, and deprived of the true rest of the soul, and may be also set free from the yoke of the law, and all the tedious ceremonies and services of it, and may enjoy peace with God in his ordinances, providences, and in our own consciences, and so have the prospect and earnest of perfect and everlasting rest in heaven.

2. He demonstrates the truth of his assertion, that we have as great advantages as they. For, says he, ver. 2. *Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them*; the same gospel for substance was preached under both Testaments, though not so clearly; not in so comfortable a manner under the Old as under the New. The best privileges the ancient Jews had were their gospel privileges, the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament were the gospel of that dispensation, and whatever was excellent in it was the respect it had to Christ. Now if this was their highest privilege, we are not inferior to them; for we have the gospel as well as they, and in greater purity and perspicuity than they had.

3. He assigns the reason why so few of the ancient Jews profited by that dispensation of the gospel which they enjoyed, and that was their want of faith; *the word preached did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it*, ver. 2. Observe, 1. The word is preached to us that we may profit by it; that we may gain spiritual riches by it; it is a price put into our hands to get wisdom, the rich endowment of the soul. 2. There have been in all ages a great many unprofitable hearers: Many that seem to deal much in sermons, in hearing the word of God, but gain nothing to their souls thereby; and they that are not gainers by hearing are great losers. 3. That which is at the bottom of all our unprofitableness under the word is our unbelief; we do not mix faith with what we hear; it is faith in the hearer that is the life of the word. Though the preacher believes the gospel, and endeavours to mix faith with his preaching, and to speak as one that has believed and so spoken, yet if the hearers have not faith in their souls to mix with the word, they will be never the better for it. This faith must mingle with every word, and be in act and exercise while we are hearing, and when we have heard the word, assenting to the truth of it, approving of it, accepting the mercy offered, applying the word to ourselves with suitable affections, then we shall find great profit and gain by the word preached.

4. On these considerations the apostle grounds his repeated and earnest caution and counsel, that they who enjoy the gospel should maintain a holy fear and jealousy over themselves, lest latent unbelief should rob them of the benefit of the word, and of that spiritual rest that is discovered and tendered in the gospel, ver. 1. *Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* Observe, 1. Grace and glory are attainable by all under the gospel: There is an offer, and a promise to those that shall accept the offer. 2. Those that may attain them may also fall short. They that might have attained salvation by faith may fall short by unbelief. 3. That it is a dreadful thing so much as to seem to fall short of the gospel-salvation, to seem so to themselves, to lose their comfortable hope; and to seem so to others, so losing the honour of their holy

holy profession. But if it be so dreadful to seem to fall short of this rest, it is much more dreadful really to fall short. Such a disappointment must be fatal. 4. One good mean to prevent either our real falling short, or seeming to fall short, is to maintain a holy and religious fear lest we should fall short. This will make us vigilant and diligent, sincere and serious; this fear will put us upon examining our faith, and exercising it; whereas presumption is the high road to ruin.

5. The apostle confirms the happiness of all those that truly believe the gospel; and that he does, 1. By asserting so positively the truth of it, from the experience of himself and others, ver. 3. *We which have believed do enter into rest.* We do enter into a blessed union with Christ, and into a communion with God through Christ; and in this state we do actually enjoy many sweet communications of pardon of sin, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and earnest of glory, resting from the servitude of sin, and reposing ourselves in God till we are prepared to rest with him in heaven. 2. He illustrates and confirms it, that they that believe are thus happy and do enter into rest. First, From God's finishing his work of creation, and so entering into his rest, ver. 3, 4. appointing our first parents to rest the seventh day, to rest in God. Now, as God finished his work, and then rested from it, and acquiesced in it, so he will cause those that believe to finish their work, and then to enjoy their rest. Secondly, From God's continuing the observation of the sabbath, after the fall and revelation of a Redeemer. They were to keep the seventh day a holy sabbath to the Lord, therein praising him who had raised them up out of nothing by creating power, and praying to him that he create them anew by his spirit of grace, and direct their faith to the promised Redeemer and Restorer of all things by which faith they find rest in their souls. 3. From God's proposing Canaan as a typical rest for the Jews that believed; and as those that did believe, viz. Caleb and Joshua, did actually enter into Canaan; so those that now believe shall enter into rest. 4. From the certainty of another rest besides that seventh day of rest instituted and observed both before and after the fall, and besides that typical Canaan rest which most of the Jews fell short of unbelief; for the psalmist hath spoken of another day and another rest. From whence it is evident, that there is a more spiritual and excellent sabbath remaining for the people of God, than that into the which Joshua led the Jews, ver. 6, 7, 8. and this rest remaining is, First, a rest of grace and comfort, and holiness in the gospel state: This is the rest wherewith the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, causes weary souls and awakened consciences to rest, and this is the refreshing. Secondly, A rest in glory: the everlasting sabbatism of heaven, which is the repose and perfection of nature and grace too, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith, and the object of all their desires. 5. This is further proved from the glorious forerunners who have actually taken possession of this rest, God and Christ. It is certain God, after the creating of the world in six days, entered into his rest; and it is certain that Christ, when he had finished the work of our redemption, entered into his rest; and these were not only examples, but earnest that believers should enter into their rest, ver. 10. *He that hath entered into rest, hath also ceased from his own works as God did from his.* Every true believer hath ceased from his own works of sin, from relying on his own works of righteousness, and from the burdensome works of the law; as God and Christ have ceased from their works of creation and redemption.

6. The apostle confirms the misery of those that do not believe; they shall never enter into this spiritual rest, either of grace here or glory hereafter. This is as certain as the word and oath of God can make it; as sure as God is entered into his rest, so sure it is that obstinate unbelievers shall be excluded; as sure as the unbelieving Jews fell in the wilderness, and never reached the promised land, so sure it is that unbelievers shall fall into destruction, and never reach heaven; as sure as Joshua, the great captain of the Jews, could not give them possession of Canaan because of their unbelief, notwithstanding his eminent valour and conduct; so sure it is that even Jesus himself, the Captain of our salvation, notwithstanding that fullness of grace and strength that dwells in him, will not, cannot give to sinful unbelievers either spiritual or eternal rest: It only remains for the people of God, others by their sin abandon themselves to eternal restlessness.

11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12. For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

In this latter part of the chapter the apostle concludes, first with a serious repeated exhortation, and then with proper and powerful motives.

1. Here we have a serious exhortation, ver. 11. *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.* Observe, 1. The end proposed, rest spiritual and eternal; the rest of grace here, and glory hereafter; in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. 2. The way to this end prescribed; and that is labour, diligent labour; this is the only way to rest; they that will not work now, shall not work hereafter. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow, and labour now will make that rest more pleasant when it comes; *the sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, Eccl. v. 12. Let us therefore labour, let us all agree, and be unanimous in this, and let us quicken one another, and call upon one another to this diligence. It is the truest act of friendship, when we see our fellow-Christians loiter, to call upon them to mind their business, and labour at it in earnest. Come, Sirs, let us all go to work; why do we sit still? why do we loiter? Come, let us labour, now is our working time, our rest remains. Thus should Christians call upon themselves, and one another, to be diligent in duty; and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

2. Here we have proper and powerful motives to make the advice effectual; which are drawn, (1.) From the dreadful example of those that have already perished by unbelief, lest any man fall after the same example of

unbelief. To have seen so many fall before us will be a great aggravation of our sin, if we will not take warning by them: Their ruin calls loudly upon us; their lost and restless souls cry to us from their torments, that we do not, by sinning as they did, make ourselves miserable as they are. (2.) From the great help and advantage we may have from the word of God to strengthen our faith and excite our diligence, that we may obtain this rest, ver. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful, &c.* By the word of God we may understand either the *essential* or the *written* word. The *essential* word, that in the beginning was with God, and was God, John i. 1. the Lord Jesus Christ, and indeed what is said in this verse concerning him; but most understand it of the written word, the holy scriptures, which are the word of God. Now of this word it is said, 1. That it is *quick*, it is very lively and active, in all its efforts, in seizing the conscience of the sinner, in cutting him to the heart, and in comforting him and binding up the wounds of the soul. They know not the word of God that call it a dead letter, as the Papists and the Quakers do; it is quick, compared to the light, and nothing quicker than the light; it is not only *quick*, but *quickening*: it is a vital light: it is a living word, *Zur*. Saints die and sinners die, but the word of God lives. *All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass: The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. *Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words, which I commanded the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?* Zech. i. 5, 6. 2. It is *powerful*. When God sets it home by his spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It is so powerful as to pull down strong holds, 1 Cor. x. 4, 5. To raise the dead, to make the deaf to hear, and the blind to see, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. It is powerful to batter down Satan's kingdom, and to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins thereof. 3. It is sharper than any two-edged sword; it cuts both ways; it is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 17. It is the two-edged sword that cometh out of the mouth of Christ, Rev. i. 16. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, for it will enter where no other sword can, and make a more critical dissection; it pierceth to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the soul and its habitual prevailing temper; makes a soul that has been a long time of a proud spirit, to be humble; of a perverse spirit, to be meek and obedient. Those sinful habits that are become as it were natural to the soul, and radicated deeply in it, and become in a sort one with it, are separated and cut off by this sword. It cuts off ignorance from the understanding, rebellion from the will, enmity from the mind, which when carnal is enmity itself against God. This sword divides between the joints and the marrow, the most secret, close and intimate parts of the body; this sword can cut off the lusts of the flesh, as well as the lusts of the mind, and make men willing to undergo the sharpest operation for the mortifying of sin. 4. It is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, even the most secret and remote thoughts and designs; it will discover to men the variety of their thoughts and purposes, the villainy of them, the bad principles they are acted by, the sinister and sinful ends they act to. The word will turn the inside of a sinner out, and let him see all that is in his heart. Now such a word as this must needs be a great help to our faith and obedience. (3.) From the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, both of his person and office. 1. Person particularly, his omniscience, ver. 13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but, &c.* This is agreeable to what Christ speaks of himself, Rev. ii. 22. *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts.* None of the creatures can be concealed from Christ; none of the creatures of God, for Christ is the Creator of them all; none of the motions and workings of our heads and hearts, which may be called creatures of our own, but what are open and manifest to him with whom we have to do as the object of our worship, and the high priest of our profession. He, by his omniscience, cuts up the sacrifice we bring to him, that it may be presented to the Father. Now, as the high-priest inspected the sacrificed beasts, cut them up to the back-bone, to see whether they were sound at heart; so all things are thus dissected, and lie open to the piercing eye of our great high-priest. And he that now tries our sacrifices, will at length, as judge, try our state. We shall have to do with him as one that will determine our everlasting state. Some read the words, to whom with us there is an account or reckoning. Christ hath an exact account of us all; he has accounted for all that believe on him; and he will account with all; our accounts are before him. This omniscience of Christ, and the account we owe of ourselves to him, should engage us to persevere in faith and obedience, till he has perfected all our affairs. 2. We have an account of the excellency and perfection of Christ, as to his office, and this particular office of our high-priest. The apostle first instructs Christians in the knowledge of their high-priest; what kind of priest he is; and then puts them in mind of the duty they owe on this account.

1. What a kind of high-priest Christ is, ver. 14. *Seeing we have such an high-priest:* That is, 1. A great high-priest, much greater than Aaron, or any of the priests of his order. The high-priests under the law were accounted great and venerable persons; but they were but faint types and shadows of Christ. The greatness of our high-priest is set forth, 1. By his being passed into the heavens. The high-priest under the law, once a year went out of the people's sight within the veil, into the holiest of all, where were the sacred signals of the presence of God; but Christ once for all is passed into the heavens, to take the government of all upon him, to send the Spirit to prepare a place for his people, and to make intercession for them. Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, by pleading the cause and presenting the offerings of his people. 2. The greatness of Christ is set forth by his name, Jesus; a physician and a saviour, and one of a divine nature, the Son of God by eternal generation; and therefore, having divine perfection, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. 3. He is not only a great, but gracious high-priest, merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing with his people, ver. 15. *We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.* Though he is so great and so far above us, yet he is very kind and tenderly concerned for us; he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities in such a manner as none else can be; for he was himself tried with all the affliction and trouble that are incident to our nature in its fallen state; and this not only that he might be able to satisfy for us, but to sympathize with us. But then, 3. He is a sinless high-priest: He was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin. He was tempted by Satan, but he came off without sin. We seldom meet with temptations, but they give us some shock. We are apt to give back, though we do not yield; but our great high-priest came off clear in his encounter with the devil; he could neither find any sin in him, nor fix any stain upon him. He was tried severely by the Father. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; and yet he sinned not either in thought, word, or deed. He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled; and such an high-priest became us. Having thus told us what a one our high-priest is, the apostle proceeds to shew us,

2. How we should demean ourselves towards him. 1. Let us hold fast our profession of faith in him, ver. 14. Let us never deny him, never be ashamed

ashamed of him before men. Let us hold fast the enlightening doctrine of Christianity in our heads, and the enlivening principles of it in our hearts, and the open profession of it in our lips, and our practical and universal subjection to it in our lives. Observe here, 1. We ought to be possessed of the doctrines, principles, and practice of the Christian life. 2. When we are so, we may be in danger of losing our hold, from the corruption of our hearts, the temptations of Satan, and the allurements of this evil world. 3. That the excellency of the high-priest of our profession, would make our apostacy from him most heinous and inexcusable; it would be the greatest folly and the basest ingratitude. 4. Christians must not only set out well, but they must hold out: they that endure to the end shall be saved, and none but they.

3. We should encourage ourselves by the excellency of our high priest to come boldly to the throne of grace, *ver. 16*. Where observe, 1. There is a throne of grace set up; a way of worship instituted, in which God may with honour meet poor sinners, and treat with them, and they may with hope draw nigh to him, repenting and believing. God might have set up a tribunal of strict and inexorable justice, dispensing death, the wages of sin, to all that are convened before it; but he has chosen to set up a throne of grace. A throne speaks authority, and bespeaks awe and reverence: A throne of grace speaks great encouragement even to the chief of sinners: Their grace reigns, and acts with sovereign freedom, power, and bounty. 2. It is our duty and interest to be often found before this throne of grace, waiting on the Lord in all the duties of his worship, secret, private, and public. It is good for us to be there. 3. Our business and errand at the throne of grace should be, that we obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Mercy and grace are the things we want; mercy to pardon all our sins, and grace to purify our souls. 4. That besides the daily dependence we have upon God for present supplies, there are some seasons in which we shall most sensibly need the mercy and grace of God; and we should lay up prayers against such seasons, times of temptation, either by adversity or prosperity, and especially a dying time: we should every day put up a petition for mercy in our last day. The Lord grant unto us that we may find mercy of the Lord at that day, *2 Tim. i. 18*. 5. That in all our approaches to this throne of grace for mercy, we should come with an humble freedom and boldness, with a liberty of spirit, and a liberty of speech; we should ask in faith, nothing doubting; we should come with a spirit of adoption, as children to a reconciled God and Father. We are indeed to come with reverence and godly fear, but not with terror and amazement; not as if we were dragged before the tribunal of justice, but kindly invited to the mercy-seat, where grace reigns, and loves to exert and exalt itself towards us. 6. That the office of Christ, as being our high priest, and such an high priest, should be the ground of our confidence in all our approaches to the throne of grace. Had we not a Mediator, we could have no boldness in coming to God; for we are guilty and polluted creatures: all we do is polluted; we cannot go into the presence of God alone; we must either go in the hand of a Mediator, or our hearts and our hopes will fail us. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: he is our advocate, and while he pleads for his people, he pleads with his price in his hand, by which he purchased all that our souls want or can desire.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter the apostle continues his discourse upon the priesthood of Christ, a sweet subject which he would not too soon dismiss. And here, (1.) He explains the nature of the priestly office in general, *ver. 1, 2, 3*. (2.) The proper and regular call there must be to this office, *ver. 4, 5, 6*. (3.) The requisite qualifications for the work, *ver. 7, 8, 9*. (4.) The peculiar order of the priesthood of Christ; it was not after the order of Aaron, but Melchisedec, *ver. 6, 7—10*. (5.) He reproves the Hebrews, that they had not made those improvements in knowledge as might have made them capable of looking into the more abstruse and mysterious parts of scripture, *ver. 11, 12, 13, 14*.

1. **F**OR every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2. Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity: 3. And by reason hereof he ought as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: 5. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee' 6. As he saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.' 7. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared. 8. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by things which he suffered: 9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

1. We have here an account of the nature of the priestly office in general, though with an accommodation to the Lord Jesus Christ; where we are told, 1. *Of what kind of beings* the high priest must be: He must be taken from among men; he must be a man, one of ourselves, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and spirit of our spirits, a partaker of our nature, and a standard bearer among ten thousand. This implies, 1. That man had sinned. 2. That God would not admit sinful man to come to him immediately and alone without an high priest, who must be taken from among men. 3. That God was pleased to take one from among men by whom they might approach God in hope, and he might receive them with honour. 4. That every one shall now be welcome to God that comes to him by this high-priest.

2. For whom every high priest is ordained, for men in things pertaining to God, i. e. for the glory of God and the good of men, that he might come between God and man. So Christ did; and therefore let us never attempt to go to God but through Christ; nor expect any favour from God but through Christ.

3. For what purpose was every high priest ordained; that he might offer

both gifts and sacrifices for sin. 1. That he might offer gifts, or free-will offerings, brought to the high priest, so offered for the glory of God, and as an acknowledgment that our all is of him and from him, we have nothing but what he is pleased to give us, and of his own we offer to him an oblation of acknowledgement. This intimates, 1. That all we bring to God must be free and not forced; it must be a gift, it must be given and not taken away again. 2. That all we bring to God must go through the high priest's hands, as the great agent between God and man. 2. That he might offer sacrifices for sin: That is, the offerings that were appointed to make atonement, that sin might be pardoned, and sinners accepted. Thus Christ is constituted a high priest for both these ends. Our good deeds must be presented by Christ to render ourselves and them acceptable; and our ill deeds must be expiated by the sacrifice of himself, that they may not condemn and destroy us. And now, as we value acceptance with God, and pardon, we must apply ourselves by faith to this our great high priest.

4. How this high priest must be qualified, *ver. 2*. 1. He must be one that can have compassion on two sorts of persons. 1. On the ignorant; or those that are guilty of sins of ignorance, he must be one that can find in his heart to pity them, and intercede with God for them; one that is willing to instruct them that are dull of understanding. 2. On those that are out of the way, out of the way of truth, duty, and happiness: and he must be one that has tenderness enough to lead them back from the by-paths of error, sin, and misery, into the right way: And this will require great patience and compassion, even the compassion of a God.

2. He must also be compassed with infirmity; and so be able from himself feelingly to consider our frame, and to sympathize with us. Thus Christ was qualified; he took upon him our sinful infirmities; and this gives us great encouragement to apply ourselves to him under every affliction; for in all the afflictions of his people he is afflicted.

5. How the high priest was to be called of God; and he must have both an internal and an external call to his office; for no man taketh his honour to himself, *ver. 4*, that is, no man ought to do it, no man can do it legally; if any does it, he must be reckoned an usurper, and treated accordingly. Here observe, 1. The office of the priesthood was a very great honour; to be employed to stand before God and man, one while representing God, and his will to men; at another time representing man and his case to God; and dealing between them about matters of the highest importance, intrusted on both sides with the honour of God, and the happiness of man, must render the office very honourable. 2. That the priesthood is an office and honour that no man ought to take to himself; if he does, he can expect no success in it, nor any reward for it, only from himself. He is an intruder who is not called of God, as was Aaron. Observe, 1. God is the fountain of all honour, especially true spiritual honour: He is the fountain of true authority, whether he calls any to the priesthood in an extraordinary way, as he did Aaron, or in an ordinary way, as he called his successors. 2. That those only can expect assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and his presence and blessings on them and their administrations, that are called of God; others may expect a blast instead of a blessing.

6. How this is brought home and applied to Christ, *ver. 5*. So Christ glorified not himself. Observe here, Though Christ reckoned it his glory to be made an high-priest, yet he would not assume that glory to himself. He could truly say, *I seek not mine own glory*, John viii. 50. Consider him as God; he was not capable of any additional glory, but as man and mediator he did not run without being sent: and if he did not, surely others should be afraid to do it.

7. The apostle prefers Christ before Aaron, both in the manner of his call, and in the holiness of his person. 1. In the manner of his call, in which God said unto him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, quoted from Psalm ii. 7. referring both to his eternal generation as God, his wonderful conception as man, and his perfect qualification as Mediator. Thus God solemnly declares his dear affection to Christ, his authoritative appointment of him to the office of a Mediator, his instant and approbation of him in that office, his acceptance of him, and of all he had done or should do in the discharge of it. Now God never said thus to Aaron: Another expression that God used in the call of Christ, we have in Psalm ex. 4. *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*, *ver. 6*. God the Father appointed him a priest of an higher order than that of Aaron; the priesthood of Aaron was to be but temporary; the priesthood of Christ was to be perpetual; the priesthood of Aaron was to be successive, descending from the fathers to the children; the priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchisedec, was to be personal, and the high-priest immortal as to his office, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, as it is more largely described in the seventh chapter, and will be opened there. 2. Christ is here preferred to Aaron in the holiness of his person. Other priests were to offer up sacrifices, as for the sins of others; so for themselves, *ver. 3*. But Christ need not to offer for sins for himself, for he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth, *Isa. liii. 9*. And such a high-priest became us.

8. We have an account of Christ's discharge of this his office, and of the consequences of that discharge, *ver. 7, 8, 9*.

1. The discharge of his office of the priesthood, *ver. 7*. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, &c. Where observe, 1. That he took to him flesh, and for some days he tabernacled therein; i. e. He became a mortal man, and reckoned his life by days; herein setting us an example how we should reckon ours. Would we reckon our lives by days, it would be a means to quicken us to do the work of every day in its day. 2. That Christ, in the days of his flesh, subjected him to death, he was a hungry, tempted, bleeding, dying Jesus! His body is now in heaven, but it is a spiritual glorious body. 3. God the Father was able to save him from death; he could have prevented his dying, but he would not; for then the great design of his wisdom and grace must have been defeated. What would have become of us, if God had saved Christ from dying? The Jews reproachfully said, *Let him deliver him now, if he will have him*, Matt. xxvii. 43. But it was in kindness to us that the Father would not suffer that bitter cup to pass away from him; for then we must have drunk the dregs of it and been miserable forever. 4. Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications to his Father, as an earnest of his intercession in heaven. A great many instances we have of Christ's praying. This refers to his prayer in his agony, *Matth. xxvi. 30*, and *chap. xxvii. 40*. and to that before his agony, *John xvii*, which he put up for his disciples and all that should believe in his name. 5. The prayers and supplications that Christ offered up, were joined with strong cries and tears; herein setting us an example not only to pray, but to be fervent and importunate in prayer. How many dry prayers, how few wet ones, do we offer up to God! 6. That Christ was heard in that he feared: How? why he was answered by present supports in and under his agonies, and in being carried well through death, and delivered from it by a glorious resurrection; he was heard in that he feared. He had an awful sense of the wrath of God, of the weight of sin. His human nature was ready to sink under the heavy load; and would have sunk, had he been quite forsaken in point of help and comfort from God; but he was heard in this, he was supported

ported under the agonies of death: He was carried through death, and there is no real deliverance from death but to be carried well through it. We may have many recoveries from sickness, but we are never saved from death till we are carried well through it: And they that are thus saved from death, shall be fully delivered at last by a glorious resurrection, of which the resurrection of Christ was the earnest and first-fruits.

2. The consequences of this discharge of his office, *ver. 8, 9, &c.* (1.) By these his sufferings *he learned obedience, though he was a son*, *ver. 8.* Here observe, 1. The privilege of Christ, *he was a son*; the only-begotten of the Father. One would have thought this might have exempted him from suffering, but it did not: Let none then, who are the children of God by adoption, expect an absolute freedom from suffering. *What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?* 2. Christ made improvement by his sufferings; he learned obedience by his passive obedience; he learned active obedience; that is, he practised that great lesson, and made it appear that he was well and perfectly learned in it; though he never was disobedient, yet he never performed such an act of obedience as when he became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross. Here he hath left us an example, that we should learn by all our affliction an humble obedience to the will of God: We need affliction to teach us submission. (2.) By these his sufferings he was made perfect, and became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him, *ver. 9.* 1. Christ by his sufferings was consecrated to his office, consecrated by his own blood. 2. By his suffering he consummated that part of his office which was to be performed on earth, making reconciliation for iniquity; and in this sense he is said to be made perfect, a perfect propitiation. 3. Hereby he is become the author of eternal salvation to men; he has, by his sufferings purchased a full deliverance from sin and misery, and a full fruition of holiness and happiness for his people. Of this salvation he hath given notice in the gospel; he has made a tender of it in the new covenant, and has sent the Spirit to enable men to accept this salvation. 4. This salvation is actually bestowed on none but those that obey Christ. It is not sufficient that we have some doctrinal knowledge of Christ, or that we make a profession of faith in him, but we must hearken to his word and obey him. He is exalted to be a prince to rule us, as well as a saviour to deliver us; and he will be a Saviour to none but to those to whom he is a prince, and who are willing that he should reign over them; the rest he will account his enemies, and treat them accordingly. But to those that obey him, devoting themselves to him, denying themselves, and taking up their cross and following him, he will be the author *eternally*, the grand cause of their salvation, and they shall own him as such for ever.

10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. 11. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are dull of hearing. 12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13. For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Here the apostle returns to what he had in *ver. 6.* cited out of *Psalms* ex. concerning the peculiar order of the priesthood of Christ, *i. e.* the order of Melchisedec. And here,

1. He declares he had many things, which he could not say to them concerning this mysterious person called Melchisedec, whose priesthood was eternal; and therefore the salvation procured thereby should be eternal also. We have a more particular account of this Melchisedec in *chap. vii.* Some think the things which the apostle means, that were hard to be uttered, were not so much concerning Melchisedec himself, as concerning Christ, of whom Melchisedec was the type. And doubtless this apostle had many things to say concerning Christ, that were very mysterious, hard to be uttered; there are great mysteries in the person and offices of the Redeemer; Christ is the great mystery of godliness.

2. He assigns the reason why he did not say all those things concerning Christ, our Melchisedec, that he had to say, and what it was that made it so difficult for him to utter them, and that was the dulness of the Hebrews to whom he wrote, *ye are dull of hearing.* There is a difficulty in the things themselves, and there may be a weakness in the ministers of the gospel to speak clearly about these things; but generally the fault is in the hearers; dull hearers make the preaching of the gospel a difficult thing, and even those that have some faith may be dull hearers; dull of understanding, and slow to believe; the understanding is weak, and does not apprehend these spiritual things; the memory is weak, and does not retain them.

3. He insists upon the faultiness of this infirmity of theirs; it was not a mere natural infirmity, but it was a sinful infirmity, and more in them than others, by reason of the singular advantages they had enjoyed for improving in the knowledge of Christ, *ver. 12.* *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.* Where observe, 1. What proficiency might have been reasonably expected from these Hebrews, *viz.* that they might have been so well instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, as to have been teachers of others. Hence learn, 1. That God takes notice of the time and helps we have for gaining scripture knowledge. 2. That from those to whom much is given, much is expected. 3. That those who have a good understanding in the gospel should be teachers of others, if not in a public, yet in a private station. 4. That none should take upon them to be teachers of others, but who have made a good improvement in spiritual knowledge themselves. 2. Observe the sad disappointment of those just expectations, *ye have need that one should teach you again, &c.* Here note, 1. That in the oracles of God there are some first principles, plain to be understood, and necessary to be learned. 2. That there are also deep and sublime mysteries, which those should search into that have learned the first principles, that so they may stand complete in the whole will of God. 3. That some persons instead of going forward in Christian knowledge, forget the very first principles that they had learned long ago; and indeed they that are not improving under the means of grace, will be losing. 4. It is a sin and shame for persons that are men for their age and standing in the church, to be children and babes in understanding.

4. The apostle shews how the various doctrines of the gospel must be dispensed to different persons. There are in the church babes and persons of full age, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* and there is in the gospel milk and strong meat. Observe, 1. Those that are babes, unskilful of the word of righteousness, must be fed with milk; they must be entertained with the plainest truths; these delivered in the plainest manner; *there must be line upon line, precept*

upon precept, here a little, and there a little, *Isa. xxviii.* 10. Christ despiseth not his babes; he hath provided suitable food for them. It is good to be babes in Christ, but not always to continue in that childish state; we should endeavour to pass the infant state; we should always remain in malice children, but in understanding we should grow up to a manly maturity. 2. There is a strong meat for those that are full of age, *ver. 14.* The deeper mysteries of religion belong to those that are of a higher class in the school of Christ, who have learned the first principles, and well improved them; so that by reason of use they have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, duty and sin, truth and error. Observe, 1. There have been always in the Christian state children, young men, and fathers. 2. Every true Christian having received a principle of spiritual life from God, stands in need of nourishment to preserve that life. 3. That the word of God is food and nourishment to the life of grace, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. 4. That it is the wisdom of ministers rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give to every one his portion; milk to babes, and strong meat to those of full age. 5. That there are spiritual senses, as well as those that are natural. There is a spiritual eye, a spiritual appetite, a spiritual taste; the soul has its sensations as well as the body; these are much depraved and lost by sin, but they are recovered by grace. 6. It is by use and exercise that these senses are improved, made more quick and strong to taste the sweetness of what is good and true, and the bitterness of what is false and evil. Not only reason and faith, but spiritual sense will teach men to distinguish between what is helpful and what is hurtful to our own souls.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter the apostle proceeds to persuade the Hebrews to make a better proficiency in religion, than they had done, as the best way to prevent apostasy, the dreadful nature and consequences of which sin he sets forth in a serious manner, ver. 1—9. And then expresses his good hopes concerning them, that they would persevere in faith and holiness, to which he exhorts them, and sets before them the great encouragement they have from God, both with respect to their duty and happiness from ver. 9. to the end.

1. **T**HEREFORE leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God. 2. Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3. And this will we do, if God permit. 4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. 5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; 6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame: 7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. 8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

1. We have the apostle's advice to the Hebrews, that they would grow up from a state of childhood to the fulness of the stature of the new man in Christ, and he declares his readiness to assist them all he could in their spiritual progress; and for their greater encouragement he puts himself with them, *let us go on.* Here observe, 1. In order to their growth, Christians must leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. How must they leave them? They must not lose them, they must not despise them, they must not forget them; they must lay them up in their hearts, and lay them as the foundation of all their profession and expectation, but they must not rest and stay in them; they must not be always laying the foundation, but they must go on and build upon it; there must be a superstructure; for the foundation is laid on purpose to support the building. Here it may be enquired, why did the apostle resolve to set strong meat before the Hebrews, when he knew they were but babes? *Answer,* 1. Though some of them were but weak, yet others of them had gained more strength; and they must be provided for suitably. And as those that are grown Christians must be willing to hear the plainest truths preached for the sake of the weak, so the weak must be willing to hear the more difficult and mysterious truths preached for the sake of those that are strong. 2. He hoped they would be growing in their spiritual strength and stature, and so be able to digest stronger meat. 2. The apostle mentions several foundation principles, which must be well laid at first, and then built upon; neither his time nor theirs must be spent in laying these foundations over and over again. These foundations are six.

1. Repentance from dead works, *i. e.* conversion and regeneration, repentance from a spiritually dead state and course, *q. d.* Have a care of destroying the life of grace in your souls; your minds were changed by conversion, and so were your lives. Take care that you return not to sin again, for then you must have the foundation to lay again; there must be a second conversion; a repenting not only of but from dead works. Observe here, 1. That the sins of persons unconverted are dead works; they proceed from persons spiritually dead, and they tend to death eternal. 2. That repentance for dead works, if it be right, is repentance from dead works; an universal change of heart and life. 3. That repentance for and from dead works is a foundation principle, which must not be laid again, though we must renew our repentance daily.

2. Faith towards God; a firm belief of the existence of God, of his nature, attributes, and perfections, the trinity of persons in the unity of essence, the whole mind and will of God as revealed in his word, particularly what relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must by faith acquaint ourselves with these things, we must assent to them, we must approve of them, and apply all to ourselves with suitable affections and actions. Observe, That repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, are connected, and always go together; they are inseparable twins; the one cannot live without the other. 2. Both of these are foundation principles, which should be once well laid, but never pulled up, so as to need to be laid over again; we must not relapse into infidelity.

3. The

3. The doctrine of baptisms; *i. e.* of being baptized by a minister of Christ with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the initiating sign or seal of the covenant of grace; strongly engaging the person so baptized to get acquainted with the new covenant; to adhere to it, and prepare to renew it at the table of the Lord, and sincerely to regulate himself according to it; and relying upon the truth and faithfulness of God for the blessings contained in it. And the doctrine of an inward baptism, that of the Spirit sprinkling the blood of Christ upon the soul, for justification, and the graces of the Spirit for sanctification. This ordinance of baptism is a foundation to be rightly laid, and daily remembered, but not repeated.

4. Laying on of hands, either on persons passing solemnly from their initiated state by baptism to the confirmed state, by returning the answer of a good conscience towards God, and sitting down at the Lord's table. This passing from incomplete to complete church-membership, was performed by laying on of hands, which the extraordinary conveyance of the gift of the Holy Ghost continued. This once done, all are obliged to abide by, and not to need another solemn admission, as at first, but to go on and grow up in Christ. Or by this may be meant, ordination of persons to the ministerial office, who are duly qualified for it, and inclined to it; and this by fasting and prayer, with laying on of the hands of the presbytery. And this is to be done but once.

5. The resurrection of the dead, *i. e.* of dead bodies; and their re-union with their souls to be eternal companions together in weal or woe, according as their state was towards God when they died, and the course of life they led in this world.

6. Eternal judgment, determining the soul of every one, when it leaves the body at death, and both soul and body at the last day, to their eternal state; every one to his proper society and employment to which they were entitled and fitted here on earth; the wicked to everlasting punishment, the righteous to life eternal.

These are the great foundation principles which ministers should clearly and convincingly unfold and closely apply: In these the people should be well instructed and established, and from these they must never depart; without these, other parts of religion have no foundation to support them.

2. The apostle declares his readiness and resolution to assist the Hebrews in building themselves upon these foundations till they arrive at perfection, *ver. 3. And this we will do, if God permit.* And hereby he teaches them, 1. That right resolution is very necessary in order to progress and proficiency in religion. 2. That resolution is right which is not only made in the sincerity of our hearts, but in an humble dependence upon God, both for strength, for assistance and righteousness, for acceptance, and for time and opportunity. 3. That ministers should not only teach people what to do, but go before them and along with them in the way of duty.

3. He shews that this spiritual growth is the surest way to prevent that dreadful sin of apostasy here from the faith. And here, 1. He shews how far persons may go in religion, and after all fall away and perish for ever. *ver. 4. 5.* 1. They may be enlightened. Some of the ancients understood this of their being baptized, but it is rather to be understood of notional knowledge and common illumination, of which persons may have a great deal, and yet come short of heaven. *Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened,* Num. xxiv. 3. and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness. 2. They may taste of the heavenly gift, feel something of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in his operations upon their souls, causing them to taste something of religion, and yet like persons in the market that taste of what they will not come up to the price of, and so take but a taste and leave it. Persons may taste religion, and seem to like it, if they could have it upon easier terms, than denying themselves, and taking up their cross and following Christ. 3. They may be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, that is, of his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; they may have cast out devils in the name of Christ, and done many other mighty works. Such gifts in the apostolical age were sometimes bestowed upon those that had no true saving grace. 4. They may taste of the good word of God; they may have some relish of gospel doctrines, may hear the word with pleasure; they may remember much of it, and talk well of it, and yet never be cast into the form and mould of it; nor has it dwelt richly in them. 5. They may have tasted of the power of the world to come; they may have been under strong impressions concerning heaven and hell; some desires of heaven, and dread of going to hell. These lengths hypocrites may go, and after all turn apostates. Now hence observe, 1. That those great things are spoken here of those that may fall away, yet it is not here said of them, that they were truly converted, or that they were justified; there is more in true saving grace, than in all that is here said of the apostates. 2. This therefore is no proof of the final apostasy of true saints. These indeed may fall frequently and finally, but yet they shall not totally and finally fall from God, the purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant that God has made with them, ordered in all things and sure; the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the word, these are their security. But the tree that hath not these roots will not stand.

2. The apostle describes the dreadful case of such as fall away after they had gone so far in the profession of religion. 1. The greatness of the sin of apostasy. It is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame. They declare that they approve of what the Jews did in crucifying Christ, and that they would be glad to do the same thing again if it were in their power. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself, who expects all should reverence his Son, and honour him as they honour the Father. They do what in them lies to represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing, and would have him to be a public shame and reproach. This is the nature of apostasy. 2. The great misery of apostates. First, It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; it is extremely hazardous; very few instances can be given of those that have gone so far and fallen away, and yet ever brought to true repentance, such a repentance as is indeed a renovation of the soul. Some have thought this is the sin against the Holy Ghost, but without ground. The sin here mentioned is plainly apostasy, both from the truth and ways of Christ: God can renew them to repentance, but he seldom does it; and with men themselves it is impossible. Secondly, Their misery is exemplified by a proper similitude, taken from the ground, that after much cultivation brings forth nothing but briars and thorns; and therefore is nigh unto cursing and is end is to be burned, *ver. 8.* And to give this the greater force, here is observed the difference that there is between the good ground and the bad, that these contraries being set one over against the other, may illustrate each other.

1. Here is a description of the good ground; it drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it. Believers do not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in; and this good ground bringeth forth fruit answerable to the cost laid out, for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of his faithful ministers, who are under Christ dressers of the ground. And this fruit-field or garden receives the blessing. God declares fruitful Christians blessed, and all wise good men account them blessed: They are blessed with increase of grace, and with farther establishment and glory at last.

2. Here is the different case of the bad ground: It bears briars and thorns, not only barren of good fruit, but fruitful in that which is bad; briars and thorns, fruitful in sin and wickedness, which is troublesome and hurtful to all about them; and will be most so to sinners themselves at last; and then such ground is rejected. God will concern himself no more about such wicked apostates; he will let them alone and cast them out of his care; he will command the clouds that they rain no more upon them. Divine influences shall be restrained, and this is not all, but such ground is nigh unto cursing; so far from receiving the blessing, that a dreadful curse hangs over it; though yet, through the patience of God, the curse is not fully executed. Lastly, Its end is to be burned. Apostasy will be punished with everlasting burnings, the fire that shall never be quenched. This is the sad end to which apostasy leads, and therefore Christians should go on and grow in grace, lest if they do not go forward, they should go backward, till they bring matters to this woeful extremity of sin and misery.

9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. 10. For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shewed toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11. And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 13. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14. Saying, Surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee. 15. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17. Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, 20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

The apostle having applied himself to the fears of the Hebrews, for the exciting their diligence, and preventing their apostasy, now proceeds to apply himself to their hopes, and candidly declares the good hope he had concerning them, that they would persevere; and purposes to them the great encouragements they had in the way of their duty.

1. He freely and openly declares the good hope he had concerning them, that they would endure to the end, *ver. 9. But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you.* Observe, 1. There are things that accompany salvation; things that are never separated from salvation; things that shew the person to be in a state of salvation, and will issue in eternal salvation. 2. The things that accompany salvation, are better things than ever any hypocrite or apostate enjoyed. They are better in their nature and in their issue. 3. That it is our duty to hope well of those in whom nothing appears to the contrary. 4. Ministers must sometimes speak by way of caution to those of whose salvation they have good hopes: And those that have in themselves good hopes, as to their eternal salvation, should yet consider seriously how fatal a disappointment it would be if they should fall short. Thus they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

2. He proposes arguments and encouragements to them to go on in the way of their duty. 1. That God had wrought a principle of holy love and charity in them which had discovered itself in suitable works which would not be forgotten of God, *ver. 10. God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, &c.* Good works and labour proceeding from love to God are commendable; and what is done to any in the name of God, shall not go unrewarded. What is done to the saints as such, God takes it as done to himself. 2. Those that expect a gracious reward for their labour of love, must continue in it as long as they have ability and opportunity. *Ye have ministered to the saints, and ye do minister; and we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence.* 3. Those that persevere in a diligent discharge of their duty, shall attain to the full assurance of hope in the end. Observe, 1. Full assurance is a higher degree of hope; is full assurance of hope; they differ not in nature but only in degree. 2. Full assurance is attainable by great diligence and perseverance to the end.

3. He proceeds to set before them caution and counsel how to attain this full assurance of hope to the end. 1. That they should not be slothful; that will clothe a man with rags: They must not love their ease, nor lose their opportunities. 2. That they would follow the good examples of those that had gone before, *ver. 12.* Where learn, 1. There are some who from assurance are gone to inherit the promises. They believed them before, now they inherit them; they are got safe to heaven. 2. The way by which they came to the inheritance, was that of faith and patience. These graces were implanted in their souls, and drawn forth into act and exercise in their lives. And if we ever expect to inherit as they do, we must follow them in the way of faith and patience. And those that do thus follow them in the way, shall overtake them at the end, and be partakers of the same blessedness.

4. The apostle closes the chapter with a clear and full account of the assured truth of the promises of God, *ver. 13. to the end.* They are all confirmed by the oath of God, and they are all founded in the eternal counsel of God, and therefore may be depended upon.

1. They are all confirmed by the oath of God. He has not only given his people his word, and his hand and seal, but his oath. And here you will observe, 1. He instanteth in the oath of God to Abraham; which being sworn to him as the father of the faithful, remains in full force and virtue to all true believers. *When God made a promise unto Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.* Observe, 1. What was the promise? *Surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee.* The blessing of God is the blessedness of his people; and those that

he hath blessed indeed, he will go on to bless, and will multiply blessings, till he has brought them to perfect blessedness. 2. What was the oath by which this promise was ratified? *He swore by himself.* He staked down his own being; and his own blessedness upon it; no greater security can be given or desired. 3. How was that oath accomplished? Abraham, in due time, obtained the promise. It was made good to him after he had patiently endured. 1. There is always an interval, and sometimes a long one, between the promise and the performance. 2. That interval is a trying time to believers, whether they have patience to endure to the end. 3. Those that patiently endure, shall assuredly obtain the blessedness promised, as sure as Abraham did. 4. The end and design of an oath, is to make the promise sure, and to encourage those to whom it is made; to wait with patience till the time for performance comes, *ver. 16.* An oath with men is for confirmation, and is an end of all strife. This is the nature and design of an oath, in which men swear by the greater, not by creatures, but by the Lord himself; and it is to put an end to all dispute about the matter, either to disputes within our own breasts, doubts and distrusts, or disputes with others, especially with the promises. Now if God would condescend to take an oath to his people, he will surely remember the nature and design of it.

2. The promises of God are all founded in his eternal council; and this council of his is an immutable council. 1. The promise of blessedness which God has made to believers, is not a rash and hasty thing, but the result of God's eternal purpose. 2. That this purpose of God was agreed upon in council, and settled there between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. 3. These councils of God can never be altered; they are immutable; God never needs to change his councils; for nothing new can arise to him who sees the end from the beginning.

3. The promises of God, that are founded in these immutable councils of God, and confirmed by the oath of God, may safely be depended upon; for here we have *two* immutable things, the council and the oath of God, in which it is impossible for God to lie, contrary to his nature, as well as to his will. Here observe, (1.) Who they are to whom God has given such full security of happiness. 1. They are the heirs of the promise: Such as have a title to the promises by inheritance, by virtue of their new birth and union with Christ. We are all by nature children of wrath. The curse is the inheritance we are born to; it is by a new and heavenly birth that any are born heirs to the promise. 2. They are such as have fled for refuge to the hope set before them. Under the law there were cities of refuge provided for those that were pursued by the avenger of blood. Here is a much better refuge prepared by the gospel; a refuge for all sinners that shall have the heart to flee to it; yea, though they have been the chief of sinners.

(2.) What God's design towards them is in giving them such securities, that they might have strong consolation. Observe, 1. God is concerned for the consolation of believers, as well as for their sanctification; he would have his children walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. 2. The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their strongest trials. The comforts of this world are too weak to bear up the soul under temptation, persecution, and death; but the consolations of the Lord are neither few nor small.

(3.) What use the people of God should make of their hope and comfort, that most refreshing and comfortable hope of eternal blessedness that God has given them. Why this is, and must be unto them, for *an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast*, &c. *ver. 19.* Here, 1. We are in this world as a ship at sea, liable to be tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. Our souls are the vessels; the comforts, and expectation, and graces, and happiness of our souls are the precious cargo, with which these vessels are loaded; heaven is the harbour to which we sail; the temptations, persecutions, and afflictions that we encounter, are the winds and waves that threaten our shipwreck. 2. We have need of an anchor to keep us sure and steady, or we are in continual danger. 3. Gospel hope is our anchor; as in our day of battle it is our helmet, so in our stormy passage through this world it is our anchor. 4. It is sure and steadfast, or else it could not keep us so. 1. It is sure in its own nature; for it is the special work of God in the soul, it is good hope through grace; it is not a flattering hope made out of the spider's web, but it is a true work of God, it is a strong and substantial thing. 2. It is steadfast as to its object: it is an anchor that has taken good hold, it enters into that which is within the veil, it is an anchor that is cast upon the rock, the rock of ages; it does not think to fasten in the sands, but enters within the veil, and fixes there upon Christ; he is the object, he is the anchor-hold of the believer's hope. As an unseen glory within the veil, is what the believer is hoping for; so an unseen Jesus within the veil is the great foundation of his hope, the free grace of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, and the powerful influences of his Spirit, are the grounds of his hope, and so it is a steadfast hope. Jesus Christ is the object and ground of the believer's hope in several respects. 1. As he is entered within the veil to intercede with God in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered up without the veil, hope sustains upon his sacrifice and intercession. 2. As he is the forerunner of his people, gone within the veil to prepare a place for them, and to assure them that they shall follow him, he is the earnest and first fruits of believers, both in his resurrection and ascension. 3. And he abides there an high-priest after the order of Melchisedec; a priest for ever, whose priesthood shall never cease, never fail, till it has accomplished its whole work and design, which is the full and final happiness of all that have believed on Christ. Now this should engage us all to clear up our interest in Christ, that we may fix our hopes in him as our forerunner, that is entered thither for us, for our sakes, for our safety, to watch over our highest interests and concerns: And then let us love heaven the more on his account, and long to be there with him, where we shall be for ever safe, and for ever satisfied.

C H A P. VII.

*The doctrine of the priestly office of Christ is so excellent in itself, and so essential a part of the Christian faith, that the apostle loves to dwell upon it. Nothing made the Jews so fond of the Levitical dispensation as the high esteem they had of their priesthood, and it was doubtless a sacred and most excellent institution; it was a very severe threatening denounced against the Jews, Hos. iii. 4. That the children of Israel should abide many days without a prince or priest, and without a sacrifice, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Now the apostle assures them that by receiving the Lord Jesus they would have a much better high priest, a priesthood of an higher order, and consequently a better dispensation or covenant, a better law and testament; this he shews in this chapter, where, 1. We have a more particular account of Melchisedec, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* 2. The excellency of his priesthood before that of Aaron, *ver. 4—11.* 3. An accommodation of all to Christ, to shew the superior excellency of his person, office, and covenant, from *ver. 11, to the end.**

1. **F**OR this Melchisedec king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: 2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all: first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace; 3. Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.

The chapter foregoing ended with a repetition of what had been cited once and again before out of Psalm cx. 4. *Jesus an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* Now this chapter is as a sermon upon that text; here the apostle sets before them some of the strong meat he had spoken of before, hoping they would by greater diligence be better prepared to digest it.

1. The great question that first offers itself is, who was this Melchisedec? All the account we have of him in the Old Testament is, *Gen. xiv. 18, 19.* &c. and in *Psalm cx. 4.* Indeed we are much in the dark about him; God has thought fit to leave us so, that this Melchisedec might be a more lively type of him whose generation none can declare. If men will not be satisfied with what is revealed, they must rove about in the dark in endless conjectures, some fancying him to have been an angel, others the Holy Ghost; but the opinions concerning him, that are best worthy our consideration, are these three.

1. The rabbins, and most of the Jewish writers, think he was Shem, the son of Noah, who was king and priest to those they descended from, after the manner of the other patriarchs; but it is not probable he should thus change his name; Besides, we have no account of his settling in the land of Canaan.

2. Many Christian writers have thought him to be Jesus Christ himself, appearing by a special dispensation and privilege to Abraham in the flesh, and who was known to Abraham by the name of Melchisedec, which agrees very well to Christ, and to what is said, *John viii. 56. Abraham saw his day and rejoiced.* Much may be said for this opinion, and what is said in *ver. 3.* does not seem to agree with any mere man; but then it seems strange to make Christ a type of himself.

3. The most received opinion is, that he was a Canaanite king that reigned in Salem, and kept up religion and the worship of the true God; that he was raised to be a type of Christ, and was honoured by Abraham as such.

But we shall leave these conjectures, and labour to understand, as far as we can, what is here said of him by the apostle, and how Christ is represented thereby, *ver. 1, 2, 3.*

1. Melchisedec was a king, and so is the Lord Jesus; a king of God's anointing; the government is laid upon his shoulders, and he rules over all for the good of his people.

2. That he was king of righteousness: His name signifies the righteous king. Jesus Christ is a rightful and righteous king; rightful in his title, righteous in his government. He is the Lord our righteousness, he has fulfilled all righteousness, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and he loves righteousness and righteous persons, and hates iniquity.

3. He was king of Salem, that is, king of peace; first king of righteousness, and after that also king of peace. So is our Lord Jesus; he by his righteousness made peace; the fruit of righteousness is peace, Christ speaks peace, creates peace, he is our peace-maker.

4. He was priest of the most high God, qualified and anointed in an extraordinary manner to be his priest among the Gentiles. So is the Lord Jesus; he is the priest of the most high God, and the Gentiles must come to God by him; it is only through his priesthood that we can obtain reconciliation and remission of sin.

5. *He was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, ver. 3.* This must not be understood according to the letter, but the scripture has chosen to set him forth as an extraordinary person, without giving us his genealogy, that he might be a fitter type of Christ, who as man was without father, as God without mother; whose priesthood is without descent, did not descend to him from another, nor from him to another, but is personal and perpetual.

6. That he met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. The story is recorded *Gen. xiv. 18.* he brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his servants when they were weary; he gave as a king, and blessed as a priest. Thus our Lord Jesus meets his people in their spiritual conflicts, and refreshes them, and renews their strength, and blesses them.

7. That Abraham gave him a tenth part of all, *ver. 2.* i. e. as the apostle explains it, of all the spoils; and this Abraham did, either as an expression of his gratitude for what Melchisedec had done for him, or as a testimony of his homage and subjection to him as a king, or as an offering vowed and dedicated to God, to be presented by his priest. And thus are we obliged to make all possible returns of love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus for all the rich and royal favours we receive from him, and to pay our homage and subjection to him as our king, and to put all our offerings into his hands to be presented by him to the Father in the incense of his own sacrifice.

8. And lastly, That this Melchisedec was made like unto the Son of God, and abideth a priest continually. He bore the image of God in his piety and authority, and stands upon record as an immortal high priest; the ancient type of him who is the eternal and only begotten of the Father, who abideth a priest for ever.

4. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6. But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. 8. And here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9. And, as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth

ceiveth tithes, paying tithes in Abraham. 10. For he was yet in the loins of his Father when Melchisedec met him.

2. Let us now consider (as the apostle advises) how great this Melchisedec was, and how far his priesthood was above that of the order of Aaron, ver. 4, 5, &c. Now consider how great this man was, &c. The greatness of this man and his priesthood appear.

1. From Abraham's paying the tenth of the spoils unto him; and it is well observed that Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec in Abraham, ver. 10. Now Levi received the office of the priesthood from God, and was to take tithes of the people; yet even Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec, as to a greater and higher priest than himself; therefore that high priest who should afterwards appear, of whom Melchisedec was a type, must be much superior to any of the Levitical priests, who paid tithes in Abraham to Melchisedec. And now by this argument of persons doing things that are matters of right or injury in the loins of their predecessors, we have an illustration how we may be said to have sinned in Adam, and fallen with him in his first transgression. We were in Adam's loins when he sinned, and that guilt and depravity that was contracted by the human nature when it was in our first parents, is equitably imputed and derived to the same nature as it is in all other persons naturally descended from them. It justly adheres to the nature, and it must be by an act of grace if ever it be taken away.

2. From Melchisedec's blessing of Abraham, who had the promises, ver. 6, 7. And without contradiction, the less is blessed of the greater. Where, 1. Observe, Abraham's great dignity and felicity, that he had the promises. He was one in covenant with God, to whom God had given exceeding great and precious promises. The man is rich and happy indeed, that hath an estate in bills and bonds under God's own hand and seal. These promises are both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; this honour have all those who receive the Lord Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and Amen. 2. Melchisedec's greater honour, in that it was his place and privilege to bless Abraham; and it is an uncontested maxim, that the less is blessed of the greater, ver. 7. He that gives the blessing is greater than he that receives it; and therefore Christ the antitype of Melchisedec, the meritor and mediator of all blessings to the children of men, must be greater than all the priests of the order of Aaron.

11. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? 12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. 14. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda: of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. 15. And it is yet far more evident; for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest. 16. Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. 17. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 18. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. 19. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. 20. And in as much as not without an oath he was made priest. 21. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this was an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord swears, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.) 22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24. But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the peoples: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

3. Observe the necessity there was of raising up another priest after the order of Melchisedec, and not after the order of Aaron, by whom that perfection should come, that could not come by the Levitical priesthood; which therefore must be changed, and the whole œconomy with it, ver. 11, 13, &c. Here, 1. It is asserted, that perfection could not come by the Levitical priesthood and the law, they could not put those that came to them into the perfect enjoyment of the good things they pointed out unto them; they could only direct them to look farther, they could only shew them the way. 2. That therefore another priest must therefore be raised up after the order of Melchisedec, by whom, and his law of faith, perfection might come to all that obey him; and blessed be God that we may have perfect holiness and perfect happiness by Christ in the covenant of grace, according to the gospel, for we are complete in him. 3. It is asserted, that the priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change of the law, there being so near relation between the priesthood and the law, the dispensation could not be the same under another priesthood; a new priesthood must be under a new regulation, managed in another way, and

by rules proper to its nature and order. 4. It is not only asserted, but proved, that the priesthood and law are changed, ver. 13, 14. That priesthood and law by which perfection could not come, are abolished, and a priest is risen, and a dispensation now set up, by which true believers may be made perfect. Now that there is such a change is obvious.

1. In the tribe of which the priesthood comes, before it was the tribe of Levi; but our great high priest sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood, ver. 14. The change of the family shews a real change of the law of priesthood.

2. In the form and order of making the priests; before, in the Levitical priesthood, they were made after the law of a carnal commandment, but our present high-priest was made after the power of an endless life. The former law appointed that the office should descend, upon the death of the father unto his eldest son, according to the order of carnal or natural generation; for none of the high-priests under that law were without father or mother, or without descent, they had not life and immortality in themselves. They had both beginning of days and end of life: and so the carnal commandment or law of primogeniture directed their succession, as it did in matters of civil right and inheritance. But the law by which Christ was constituted a priest after the order of Melchisedec, was the power of an endless life. That life and immortality which he had in himself, was his right and title to the priesthood, not his descent from former priests. This makes a great difference in the priesthood, and in the œconomy too, and gives the preference vastly to Christ and the gospel. The very law which constituted the Levitical priesthood, supposed the priests to be weak, frail, dying creatures, not able to preserve their own natural lives, but must be content and glad to survive in their posterity after the flesh; much less could they by any power or authority they had convey spiritual life and blessedness to those that came to them. But the high priest of our profession holds his office by that innate power of endless life, which he has in himself, not only to preserve himself alive, but to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all those that duly rely upon his sacrifice and intercession. Some think the law of the carnal commandment refers unto the external rites of consecration, and the carnal offerings that were made; but the power of an endless life, to the spiritual living sacrifices proper to the gospel, and the spiritual and eternal privileges purchased by Christ, who was consecrated by the eternal Spirit of life that he received without measure.

3. There is a change in the efficacy of the priesthood, the former was weak and unprofitable, made nothing perfect; the latter brought in a better hope, by which we draw near to God, ver. 18, 19. The Levitical priesthood brought nothing to perfection; it could not justify men persons from guilt; it could not sanctify them from inward pollution; it could not cleanse the consciences of the worshippers from dead works; all it could do was to lead them to the antitype. But the priesthood of Christ carries in it and brings along with it a better hope; it shews us the true foundation of all that hope we have towards God for pardon and salvation; and it more clearly discovers the great objects of our hope; and so it tends to work in us a more strong and lively hope of acceptance with God. And by this hope we are encouraged to draw nigh unto God; to enter into a covenant union with him; to live a life of converse and communion with him. We may now draw near with a true heart, and with the full assurance of faith, having our minds sprinkled from an evil conscience. The former priesthood rather kept men at a distance, and under a spirit of bondage.

4. There is a change in God's way of acting in this priesthood. He has taken an oath to Christ, which he never did to any of the order of Aaron. God never gave them any such assurance of their continuance, never engaged himself by oath or promise that theirs should be an everlasting priesthood; and therefore gave them no reason to expect the perpetuity of it, but rather to look upon it as a temporary law. But Christ was made a priest with the oath of God; the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, ver. 21. Here God has upon oath declared the immutability, excellency, efficacy, and eternity of the priesthood of Christ.

5. There is a change in that covenant, of which the priesthood was a security, and the priest a surety; that is, a change in the dispensation of that covenant. The gospel dispensation is more full, free, more perspicuous, more spiritual, and more efficacious than that of the law. Christ is in this gospel-covenant a surety for us to God, and for God to us, to see that the articles be performed on both parts. He has surely tied the divine and human nature together in his own person, and therein given assurance of reconciliation; and he has as surely tied God and man together in the bond of everlasting covenant. He pleads with men to keep their covenant with God, and he pleads with God that he will fulfil his promises to men, which he is always ready to do in a way suitable to his majesty and glory, that is, through a mediator.

6. There is a remarkable change in the number of the priests under these different orders: In that of Aaron, there was a multitude of priests, of high priests, not at once, but successively; but in this of Christ there is but one and the same: The reason is plain, the Levitical priests were many, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. Their office, how high and honourable soever, could not secure them from dying; and as one died another must succeed, and after a while must give place to a third, till the number was become very great. But this our high priest continues for ever, and his priesthood is ἀσπράδατος, an unchangeable one, that does not pass from one to another, as the former did; it is always in the same hand there can be no vacancy in this priesthood, no hour, or moment in which the people are without a priest to negotiate their spiritual concerns in heaven; such a vacancy might be very dangerous and prejudicial to them; but this is their safety and happiness, that this everlasting high priest is able to save to the utmost in all times, in all cases, in every juncture, all that come to God by him, ver. 25. So that here is a manifest alteration much for the better.

7. There is a remarkable difference in the moral qualifications of the priests; those that were of the order of Aaron, were not only mortal men, but sinful men, that had their sinful as well as natural infirmities; they needed to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, and then for the people: But our high priest, who was consecrated by the word of the oath, needed only to offer up once for the people, never at all for himself; for he has not only an immutable consecration to his office, but an immutable sanctity in his person. He is such an high priest as became us, holy, harmless, and undefiled, &c. ver. 26, 27, 28.

Here observe, 1. Our case as sinners needed an high priest to make satisfaction and intercession for us. 2. No priest could be suitable or sufficient for our reconciliation to God, but one that was perfectly righteous in his own person, he must be righteous in himself, or he could not be a propitiation for our sin, or our advocate with the Father. 3. That the Lord Jesus was exactly such an high priest as we wanted, for he has a personal holiness, absolutely perfect. And observe the description we have of the personal holiness of Christ expressed in various terms, and some learned divines think they all of them relate to his perfect purity.

1. He is holy, *i. e.* perfectly free from all the habits or principles of sin, not the least disposition to it in his nature; no sin dwells in him, though it does in the best of Christians, not the least sinful inclination.

2. He is harmless, *i. e.* perfectly free from all actual transgression, has done no violence, nor is there any deceit in his mouth, never did the least wrong to God or man.

3. He is undefiled, that is, was never accessory to other men's sins; the best of Christians have need to pray that God would forgive them their other men's sins. It is a difficult thing to keep ourselves pure, so as not to partake in the guilt of other men's sins, by contributing some way towards them, or not doing what we ought to prevent them. Christ was undefiled; though he took upon him the guilt of our sins, yet he never involved himself in the fact and fault of them.

4. He is separate from sinners, not only in his present state, having entered as our high priest into the holiest of all, into which nothing defiled can enter; but in his personal purity he has no such union with sinners, either natural or federal, as can derive upon him original sin. This comes upon us by virtue of our natural and federal union with the first Adam, we descending from him in the ordinary way. But Christ was, by his ineffable conception in the virgin, separate from sinners; though he took a true human nature, yet the miraculous way in which it was conceived, set him upon a separate foot from all the rest of mankind.

5. He is made higher than the heavens. Most expositors understand this concerning his state of exaltation in heaven, at the right hand of God, to perfect the design of his priesthood. But Dr. Goodwin thinks this may be very justly referred to the personal holiness of Christ, that is greater and more perfect than the holiness of the hosts of heaven, that is, the holy angels themselves; who, though they are free from sin, yet are not in themselves free from all possibility of sinning. And therefore we read, *God putteth no trust in his holy ones, and he chargeth his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. that is, with weakness and peccability. They may be angels one hour, and devils another, as many of them were; and that the holy angels shall not now fall, does not proceed from a defectibility of nature, but from the election of God; they are elect angels.

It is very likely this explanation of the words, *made higher than the heavens*, may be thought too much strained, and that it ought to be understood of the dignity of Christ's state, and not the perfect holiness of his person; and the rather because it is said he was made higher, *υψωθη*; but it is well known that word is used in a neutral sense, as where it is said *υψωθη ο Θεος ανθρωπος*, *Let God be true*.

The other characters in the verse plainly belong to the personal perfection of Christ in holiness, as opposed to the sinful infirmities of the Levitical priests; and it seems congruous to think this must do so too, if it may be fairly taken in such a sense; and it appears yet more probable, since the validity and prevalency of Christ's priesthood in *ver. 27.* is placed in the impartiality and disinterestedness of it: He needed not to offer up for himself, it was a disinterested mediation; he mediated for that mercy for others which he did not need for himself; had he needed it himself, he had been a party, and could not have been a mediator; a criminal, and could not have been an advocate for sinners. Now to render his mediation the more impartial and disinterested, it seems requisite not only that he had no present need of that favour for himself, which he mediated for in behalf of others, but that he never could stand in need of it. Though he needed it not today, yet if he knew he might be in those circumstances as to need it tomorrow, or in any future time, he must have been thought to have had some eye upon his own interest, and therefore could not act with that impartial regard and pure zeal for the honour of God on one hand; and that tender pure compassion for poor sinners on the other. I pretend not here to follow the notes of our late excellent expositor, into whose labours we have entered, but have taken the liberty to vindicate this notion of the learned Dr. Goodwin from the exceptions that I know have been made to it; and I have the rather done it, because if it will hold good, it gives us farther evidence how necessary it was that the mediator should be God, since no mere creature is of himself possessed of that impeccability which will set him above all possible need of favour and mercy for himself.

C H A P. VIII.

In this chapter the apostle pursues his former subject, the priesthood of Christ. And, 1. He sums up what he had already said, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. He sets before them the necessary parts of the priestly office, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* And, 3. Largely illustrates the excellency of the priesthood of Christ, by considering the excellency of that new dispensation of covenant for which Christ is the mediator, *ver. 6.* to the end.

1. **N**OW of the things which we have spoken, *this* is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

1. Here is a summary recital of what had been said before concerning the excellency of Christ's priesthood, shewing both what we have in Christ, where he now resides, and what sanctuary he is the minister of. 1. What we have in Christ; we have an high priest, and such an high priest, as no other people ever had, no age of the world, or of the church, ever produced; all others were but types and shadows of this high priest. He is adequately fitted and absolutely sufficient to all the intents and purposes of an high priest, both with respect to the honour of God, and the happiness of men and himself; the great honour of all those that have an interest in him. 2. Where he now resides: *he is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high*, that is, of the glorious God of heaven. There the mediator is placed, and he is possessed of all authority and power both in heaven and upon earth; this is the reward of his humiliation; this authority he exerciseth for the glory of his Father, for his own honour, and for the happiness of all that belong to him, and he will by his almighty power bring every one of them in their own order to the right hand of God in heaven, as members of his mystical body, that where he is they may be also. 3. What is that *sanctuary*, of which he is a minister, *of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man*, *ver. 2.* The tabernacle which was pitched by man, according to the appointment of God: There was an outer part, in which was the altar where they were to offer their sacrifices, and this typified Christ dying; and there was an interior part within the veil, which typified Christ interceding for the people in heaven. Now this tabernacle Christ never entered into, but having finished the work of satisfaction in the *true tabernacle* of his own body, he is now a minister of the sanctuary, the holy of holies, the true tabernacle in heaven, there taking care of his peoples affairs, interceding with God for them, that their

sins may be pardoned, and their persons and services accepted through the merit of his sacrifice. He is not only in heaven enjoying great dominion and dignity, but, as the high priest of his church, executing this office for them all in general, and every member of the church in particular.

3. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. 4. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see (saith he) *that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

Here the apostle sets before the Hebrews the necessary parts of Christ's priesthood, or what it was that belonged to that office, in conformity to what every high priest is ordained to. 1. Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, whatever was brought by the people to be presented to God, whether expiatory sacrifices, or peace-offerings, or thank-offerings; these must be offered by the priest, who was to expiate their guilt by the blood of the sacrifice, and perfume their gifts and services by his holy incense, to render their persons and performances typically acceptable; so then it necessarily belongs to the priesthood of Christ, that he should have somewhat to offer; and he, as the antitype, had himself to offer, his human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, as the great atoning sacrifice that finished transgression, and made an end of sin once for all; and he hath the incense of his own righteousness and merits too, to offer with all that his people offer up to God by him, to render them acceptable. We must not dare to approach to God, or to present any thing to him but in and through Christ, depending upon his merits and mediation; for if we are accepted, it is in the beloved. 2. Christ must now execute his priesthood in heaven, in the holy of holies, the true tabernacle which the Lord hath fixed. Thus the type must be fully answered; having finished the work of sacrificing here, he must go into heaven to present his righteousness, and to make intercession there. For, 1. *If Christ were on earth, he should not be a priest*, *ver. 4.* that is, not according to the Levitical law, as not being of the line of that priesthood; and so long as that priesthood continued, there must be a strict regard had to the divine institution in every thing. 2. All the services of the priest, under the law, and every thing in that tabernacle which was framed according to the pattern in the mount, were only samples and shadows of heavenly things, *ver. 5.* Christ is the substance and end of the law for righteousness. Something therefore there must be in Christ's priesthood that answers to the high priest's entering within the veil to make intercession, without which he could not have been a perfect priest; and what is that but the ascension of Christ into heaven, and his appearance there in the sight of God for his people, to present their prayers, and plead their cause? So that if he had full continued on earth, he could not have been a perfect priest: and an imperfect one he could not be.

8 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. 11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 13. In that he saith, *A new covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.

In this part of the chapter the apostle illustrates and confirms the superior excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of Aaron, from the excellency of that covenant, or that dispensation of the covenant of grace, of which Christ was the mediator, *ver. 6.* his ministry is more excellent, by how much he is the mediator of a better covenant. The body and soul too of all divinity (as some observe) consist very much in rightly distinguishing between the two covenants, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, and between the two dispensations of the covenant of grace, that under the Old Testament, and that under the New. Now observe,

1. What is here said of the old covenant, or rather of the old dispensation of the covenant of grace; of this it is said, 1. That it was made with the fathers of the Jewish nation at mount Sinai, *ver. 9.* and Moses was the mediator of that covenant, when God took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which speaks the great affliction, condescension, and tender care of God towards them. 2. That this covenant was not found faultless, *ver. 7, 8.* it was a dispensation of darkness and dread tending to bondage, and only a school-master to bring us to Christ; it was perfect in its kind, and fitted to answer its end, but very imperfect in comparison of the gospel. 3. That it was not sure or steadfast; for the Jews continued not in that covenant, and the Lord regarded them not, *ver. 9.* They dealt ungratefully with their God, and cruelly with themselves, and fell under God's displeasure. God will regard those that remain in his covenant, but will reject those that cast away his yoke from them. 4. That it is decayed, grown old and vanisheth away, *ver. 13.* it is antiquated, cancelled, out of date,

date, of no more use in gospel times than candles are when the sun is risen. Some think the covenant of peculiarity did not quite decay till the destruction of Jerusalem, though it was forfeited at the death of Christ, and was made old, and was now to vanish and perish, and the Levitical priesthood vanished with it.

2. What is here said of the New Testament dispensation, to prove the superior excellency of Christ's ministry. It is said, 1. That it is a better covenant, *ver. 6.* a more clear and comfortable dispensation and discovery of the grace of God to sinners, bringing in holy light and liberty to the soul; it is without fault, well ordered in all things; it requires nothing but what it promises grace to perform; it accepts of godly sincerity, accounting it gospel perfection; every transgression does not turn us out of covenant, all is put into a good and safe hand. 2. That it is established upon better promises, more clear and express, more spiritual, more absolute, the promises of spiritual and eternal blessings are in this covenant positive and absolute, the promises of temporal blessings with a wife and kind proviso, as far as shall be for God's glory, and his people's good. This covenant contains in it promises of assistance and acceptance in duty, promises of progress and perseverance in grace and holiness, of bliss and glory in heaven, which were more obscurely shadowed forth by the promises of the land of Canaan, a type of heaven. 3. It is a new covenant, even that new covenant that God long ago declared he would make with the house of Israel, that is, all the Israel of God; this was promised in *Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.* and accomplished in Christ: This will also be a new covenant, in which all that truly take hold of it shall be always found preserved by the power of God; it is God's covenant; his mercy, love, and grace moved for it; his Son purchased it; his Spirit brings souls into it, and builds them up in it. 4. The articles of this covenant are very extraordinary, which are sealed between God and his people by baptism and the Lord's supper; whereby they bind themselves to their part, and God assures them he will do his part; and his is the main and principal part, on which his people depend for grace and strength to do theirs. Here,

1. God articles with his people, *that he will put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, ver. 10.* He once wrote his laws to them, now he will write his laws in them; that is, he will give them understanding to know and to believe his laws. He will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them, consciences to recognize them; he will give them courage to profess them, and power to put them in practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. This is the foundation of the covenant; and when this is laid, duty will be done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and comfortably.

2. He articles with them to take them into a near and very honourable relation to himself. 1. He will be to them a God; *i. e.* he will be all that to them, and do all that for them, that God can be and do. Nothing more can be said in a thousand volumes than is comprehended in these few words, *I will be a God to them.* 2. They shall be to him a people, to love, honour, observe, and obey him in all things; complying with his cautions, conforming to his commands, comporting with his providences, copying out his example, taking complacency in his favour. This those must do and will do that have God for their God; this they are bound to do as their part of the contract; this they shall do, for God will enable them to do it, as an evidence that he is their God, and that they are his people; for it is God himself that first sounds the relation, and then fills it up with grace suitable and sufficient, and helps them in their measure to fill it up with love and duty; so that God engages both for himself and themselves.

3. He articles with them, that they shall grow more and more acquainted with their God, *ver. 11. They shall all know me from the least to the greatest,* inasmuch as that there shall not be so much need of one neighbour teaching another the knowledge of God. Here observe, 1. That in the want of better instruction one neighbour should be teaching another to know the Lord, as they have ability and opportunity for it. 2. That this private instruction shall not be so necessary under the New Testament as under the Old. The old dispensation was shadowy, dark, ritual, and less understood, their priests preached but seldom, and but a few at a time, and the Spirit of God was more sparingly given out. But under the new dispensation there shall be such plenty of public qualified preachers of the gospel, and dispensers of ordinances statedly in the solemn assemblies, and so great a flocking to them, as doves to their windows, and such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of God to make ministration of the gospel effectual, that there should be a mighty increase and spreading of Christian knowledge in persons of all sorts, of all sexes and all ages. O that this promise might be fulfilled in our days, that the hand of God may be with his ministers, that a great number may believe, and be turned to the Lord!

4. God articles with them about the pardon of their sins, as what always accompanies the true knowledge of God, *ver. 12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, &c.* Observe, 1. The freeness of this pardon; it does not result from merit in man, but from mercy in God; he pardons for his own name sake. 2. The fulness of this pardon; it extends to their unrighteousness, sins, and iniquities; to all kinds of sin, to sins highly aggravated. 3. The fixedness of this pardon; it is so final and so fixed, that God will remember their sins no more; he will not recall his pardon; he will not only forgive their sins, but forget them; treat them as if he had forgot them. This pardoning mercy is connected with all other spiritual mercies; unpardoned sins prevents mercy, and pulls down judgments, but the pardon of sin prevents judgment, and opens a wide door to all spiritual blessing; it is the effect of that mercy that is from everlasting, and the earnest of that mercy that shall be to everlasting. This is the excellency of the new dispensation, and those the articles of it; and therefore we have no reason to repine, but great reason to rejoice that that former dispensation is antiquated and vanished away.

C H A P. IX.

The apostle having declared the Old Testament dispensation antiquated and vanished away, proceeds to let the Hebrews see the correspondence there was between the Old Testament and the New; and that whatever was excellent in the Old, was typical and representative of the New: which therefore must as far excel the Old, as the substance does the shadow. The Old Testament was never intended to be rested in, but to prepare for the institutions of the gospel. And here he treats, 1. Of the tabernacle, the place of worship, from *ver. 1—6.* 2. Of the worship and services performed in the tabernacle, *ver. 6, 7.* 3. Delivers the spiritual sense and the main design of all, *ver. 8.* to the end.

1. **T**HEN verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2. For there was a tabernacle made, the first wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the sanctuary. 3. And after the second

vail, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all; 4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna; and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak particularly.

1. The apostle gives an account here of the tabernacle, that place of worship, which God appointed to be pitched on earth; it is called a worldly sanctuary, wholly of this world, as to the materials of which it was built; and a building that must be taken down; it is called a worldly sanctuary, because it was the court and palace of the king of Israel. God was their king, and, as other kings, had his court or place of residence, and attendants, furniture and provision suitable thereto. This tabernacle, of which we have the model, *Exod. xxv. 26.* was a moving temple, shadowing forth in the settled state of the church militant, and the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. Now of this tabernacle it is said, 1. That it was divided into two parts, called a first and second tabernacle, an inner and an outer part; representing the two states of the church militant and triumphant, and the two natures of Christ, human and divine. 2. We are told what was placed in each part of the tabernacle.

1. In the outer part: And there were several things, of which you have here a sort of schedule.

1. The candlestick, and doubtless not an empty and unlighted one, but where the lamps were always burning. And there was need of it, for there were no windows in the sanctuary; and this was to convince the Jews of the darkness and mysterious nature of that dispensation. Their light was only candle-light, in comparison of the fulness of light which Christ, the sun of righteousness, would bring along with him, and communicate to his people; for all our light is derived from him the fountain of light.

2. The table and the shew-bread set upon it. The table was set directly opposite to the candlestick, which shews, That by light from Christ we must have communion with him, and one with another. We must not come in the dark to his table, but by light from Christ must discern the Lord's body. On this table were placed twelve loaves for the twelve tribes of Israel; a loaf for a tribe, which stood from sabbath to sabbath, and on that day were renewed. The shew-bread may be considered either as the provision of the palace; though the king of Israel needed it not, yet in the resemblance of the palaces of earthly kings, there must be this provision laid in weekly; or the provision made in Christ for the souls of his people, suitable to the wants and to the relief of their souls. He is the bread of life; in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; we may have fresh supplies from Christ, especially every Lord's day. This outer part is called the sanctuary or holy, because erected to the worship of a holy God, to represent a holy Jesus, and to entertain a holy people, for their farther improvement in holiness.

2. We have an account of what was in the inner part of the sanctuary, which was within the second vail, and is called the holiest of all. This second vail, which divided between the holy and the most holy place, was a type of the body of Christ; by the rending whereof not only a view but a way was opened for us into the holiest of all, the type of heaven itself. Now in this part were,

1. The golden censer, which was to hold the incense, or the golden altar set up to burn the incense upon; both the one and the other were typical of Christ, of his pleasing and prevailing intercession which he makes in heaven, grounded upon the merits and satisfaction of his sacrifice, upon which we are to depend for acceptance and the blessing from God.

2. The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with pure gold, *ver. 4.* This typified Christ and his perfect obedience to the law, and fulfilling all righteousness for us. Now here we are told both what was in this ark; and what was over it. 1. What was in it. 1. The golden pot that had manna, which when preserved by the Israelites in their own houses contrary to the command of God, presently putrefied and stank; but now being by God's appointment deposited here in his house, was kept from putrefaction, always pure and sweet; and this to teach us, that it is only in Christ that our persons, our graces, our performances are kept pure; it was also a type of that bread of life we have in Christ, the true ambrosia that gives immortality. This was also a memorial of God's miraculously feeding his people in the wilderness, that they might never forget such signal favour, nor distrust God for the time to come. 2. Aaron's rod that budded; and thereby shewed that God had chosen him of the tribe of Levi, to minister before him of all the tribes of Israel, and so an end was put to the murmuring of the people, and to their attempt to invade the priest's office, *Numb. xvii.* This was that rod of God with which Moses and Aaron wrought such wonders; and this was a type of Christ who is styled the Man, the Branch, *Isa. xi. 1.* by whom God has wrought wonders for the spiritual deliverance, defence, and supply of his people, and for the destruction of their enemies. It was a type of divine justice, by whom Christ the Rock was smitten, and and from whom the cool refreshing waters of life flow into our souls. 3. The tables of the covenant, in which the moral law was written, signifying the regard God hath to the preservation of his holy law, and the care we all ought to have, that we keep the law of God; that this we can only do in and through Christ, by strength from him, nor can our obedience be accepted but through him.

2. What was over the ark, *ver. 5.* Over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.

1. The mercy seat which was the covering of the ark; it was called the propitiatory, and it was of pure gold, as long and as broad as the ark in which the tables of the law were laid; it was an eminent type of Christ, and of his perfect righteousness, ever adequate to the dimensions of the law of God, and covering all our transgressions, interposing between the Schekinah or symbol of God's presence, and our sinful failures, and covering them.

2. The Cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat, representing the holy angels of God, who take pleasure in looking into the great work of our redemption by Christ, and are ready to perform every good office under the Redeemer for those that are the heirs of salvation. The angels attended Christ at his birth, in his temptation, under his agonies at his resurrection, and in his ascension, and will attend his second coming. God manifest in the flesh was seen, observed, visited by the angels.

6. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God: 7. But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.

From the description of the place of worship in the Old Testament dispensation, the apostle proceeds,

2. To speak of the duties and services performed in those places, *ver. 6*. When the several parts and furniture of the tabernacle were thus settled, then what was to be done there? Why,

1. The ordinary priest went always into the first tabernacle to accomplish the service of God. Observe, 1. None but priests were to enter into the first part of the tabernacle, and this to teach us all, that persons not qualified, not called of God, must not intrude into the office and work of the ministry. 2. The ordinary priests were not only to enter into the first part of the tabernacle; it would have been fatal presumption in them to have gone into the holiest of all; and this teaches us that even ministers themselves must know and keep in their proper stations, and not presume to usurp the prerogative of Christ, by offering up incense of their own, or adding their own inventions to the ordinances of Christ, or lording it over mens consciences. 3. That these ordinary priests were to enter into the first tabernacle always; that is, they were to devote themselves and all their time to the work of their office, and not alienate themselves at any time from it; and that they should be in an habitual readiness for the discharge of their office; and that at all stated appointed times they should actually attend to their work. 4. The ordinary priests must enter into the first tabernacle, that they might there accomplish the service of God; they must not do the work of God partially or by halves, but stand complete in the whole of his will and council; not only beginning well, but proceeding well, and persevering to the end, they fulfil the ministry they have received.

2. Into the second, the interior part, went the high priest alone, *ver. 7*. This part was an emblem of heaven, and Christ's ascension thither. Here observe, 1. None but the high priest must go into the holiest; so none but Christ could enter into heaven in his own name, and by his own right, and by his own merits. 2. In entering into the holiest, the high priest must first go through the outer sanctuary, and through the vail; signifying that Christ went to heaven through a holy life and a violent death; the vail of his flesh was rent asunder. 3. That the high priest entered but once a year into the holiest, and in this the antitype excels the type, (as in every thing else) for he is entered once for all, during the whole dispensation of the gospel. 4. The high priest must not enter without blood; signifying that Christ having undertaken to be our high priest, he could not have been admitted into heaven without shedding his blood for us; and that none of us can enter either into God's gracious presence here, or his glorious presence hereafter, but by the blood of Jesus. 5. That the high priest under the law entering into the holiest, offered up that blood for himself, and his own errors first, and then for the errors of the people, *ver. 7*. This teaches us that Christ is a more excellent person and high priest than any under the law, for he has no errors of his own to offer for. And it teaches us that ministers, when in the name of Christ they intercede for others, must first apply the blood of Christ to themselves for their pardon. 6. That when the legal high priest had offered for himself, he must not stop there, but must also offer for the errors of the people. Our high priest, though he needs not to offer for himself, yet he forgets not to offer for his people; he pleads the merit of his sufferings for the benefit of his people on earth. Observe, 1. Sins are errors, and great errors, both in judgment and practice. We greatly err when we sin against God, and who can understand all his errors? 2. They are such errors as leave guilt upon the conscience, not to be washed away but by the blood of Christ; and that the sinful errors of priests and people must be all done away by the same means, the application of the blood of Christ; we must plead this blood on earth, while he is pleading it in heaven for us.

8. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: 9. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, 10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation. 11. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. 13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

In these verses the apostle undertakes to deliver to us the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in all the ordinances of the tabernacle and legal economy, both place and worship. The scriptures of the Old Testament are of inspiration of God; holy men of old spoke and wrote as the Holy Ghost directed them. And these Old Testament records are of great use and significance, not only to those that first received them, but even to Christians, who ought not to satisfy themselves to read the institutes of the Levitical law, but to learn what the Holy Ghost signified and suggests to them thereby. Now here are several things mentioned, as the things that the Holy Ghost signified and certified to his people thereby.

1. That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was standing, *ver. 8*. This was one lesson the Holy Ghost would teach us by these types; the way to heaven was not so clear and plain, nor so much frequented under the Old Testament as under the New. It is the honour of Christ and the gospel, and the happiness of those that live under it, that now life and immortality are brought to light: There was not that free access to God then as now; God has now opened a wider door, and there is room for more, yea, even for as many as are truly willing to return unto him by Christ.

2. That the first tabernacle was only a figure for the time then present, *ver. 9*. It was a dark dispensation, and but of short continuance, only designed for a while to typify the great things of Christ and the gospel, that were in due time to shine forth in their own brightness, and thereby cause all the shadows to flee away, and disappear as the stars before the rising sun.

3. That none of the gifts and sacrifices there offered could make the offerers perfect as pertaining to conscience, *ver. 9*. That is, they could not

take away either the desert, or defilement, or dominion of sin; they could not deliver conscience from the dread of the wrath of God; they could neither discharge the debts, nor resolve the doubts of him that did the service. A man might run through them all in their several orders and frequent returns, and continue to do so all his days, and yet neither find his conscience pacified nor purified by them; he might thereby be saved from corporal and temporal punishments that were threatened against the non-observers, but he could not be saved by them from sin or hell, as all those are that believe in Christ.

4. The Holy Ghost hereby signifies that the Old Testament institutions were but external carnal ordinances imposed upon them until the time of reformation, *ver. 10*. Their imperfection lay in three things: 1. Their nature: they were but external and carnal meats and drinks, and divers washings. All these were bodily exercises which profit little; they could only satisfy the flesh, or at best sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. 2. That they were not such as were left indifferent to them to use or disuse, but they were imposed upon them by grievous corporal punishments, and this was ordered on purpose to make them look more to the promised seed, and long more for him. 3. That these were never designed for a perpetuity, but only to continue till the time of reformation, till the better things provided for them were actually bestowed upon them. Gospel times are and should be times of reformation, of clearer light as to all things necessary to be known, of greater love, bearing ill-will to none and good-will to all, and having complacency in all that are like unto God; of greater liberty and freedom both of spirit and speech, and of a more holy living according to the rule of the gospel. We have far greater advantages under the gospel, than they had under the law; and we must either be better, or we shall be worse than they; a conversation becoming the gospel, is an excellent way of living; nothing mean, or foolish, or vain, or servile becomes the gospel.

5. The Holy Ghost signifies to us hereby, that we never make the right use of types but when we apply them to the antitype; and whenever we do so, it will be very evident that the antitype (as in reason it should) does greatly excel the type, which is the main drift and design of all that is said. And as he writes to those that believed that Christ was come, and that Jesus was the Christ; so he very justly infers that he is infinitely above all the legal high priests, *ver. 11, 12*, and he illustrates it very fully. For,

1. Christ is the high priest of good things to come, by which may be understood, 1. All the things that were to come during the Old Testament, and now are come under the New. All the spiritual and eternal blessings the Old Testament saints had in their day and under their dispensation, were owing to the Messiah to come, on whom they believed. The Old Testament set forth in shadows what was to come, the New Testament is the accomplishment of the Old. 2. All the good things yet to come and to be enjoyed in a gospel-state when the promises and prophecies made to the gospel-church in the latter days shall be accomplished; all these depend upon Christ and his priesthood, and shall be fulfilled. 3. Of all the good things to come in the heavenly state, which will perfect both the Testaments, as the state of Glory will perfect the state of grace, this state will be in a much higher sense the perfection of the New Testament, than the New Testament was the perfection of the Old. Observe, All good things past, present and to come, were and are founded upon, and flowing from the priestly office of Christ.

2. Christ is an high priest by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, &c. *ver. 11*. a tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of his building, i. e. his own body, or rather human nature, conceived by the Holy Ghost overshadowing the blessed virgin. This was a new fabrick, a new order of building infinitely superior to all earthly structures, not excepting the tabernacle or the temple itself.

3. Christ our high priest is entered into heaven, not as their high priest entered into the holiest, with the blood of bulls and of goats, but by his own blood typified by theirs, and infinitely more precious. And this,

4. Not for one year only, which shewed the imperfection of that priesthood, that it did but typically obtain a year's reprieve or pardon. But our high priest entered into heaven once for all, and has obtained not a yearly respite, but eternal redemption, and so needs not to make an annual entrance. In each of these types there was something that shewed it was a type, and resembled the antitype, and something that shewed it was but a type, and fell short of the antitype, and therefore ought by no means to be set up in competition with the antitype.

5. The Holy Ghost farther signified and shewed what was the efficacy of the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices, and from thence infers the much greater efficacy of the blood of Christ. 1. The efficacy of the blood of the legal sacrifices extended to the purifying of the flesh, *ver. 13*. it freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness, and from temporal punishment, and intitled to and fitted for some external privileges. 2. He infers very justly from hence the far greater efficacy of the blood of Christ, *ver. 14*. how much more shall the blood of Christ, &c. Here observe,

1. What it was that gave such efficacy to the blood of Christ. 1. It was his offering himself to God, the human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, he being both priest, altar and sacrifice, his divine nature serving for the two first, and his human nature for the last; now such a priest, altar and sacrifice, could not but be propitiatory. 2. It was Christ's offering up himself to God through the eternal Spirit, not only as the divine nature supported the human, but the Holy Ghost, which he had without measure, helping him in all, and in this great act of obedience offering himself. 3. It was Christ's offering himself to God without spot, without any sinful stain either in his nature or life; this was conformable to the law of sacrifice, which were to be without blemish. Now farther observe,

2. What the efficacy of Christ's blood is; it is very great. For, 1. It is sufficient to purge the conscience from dead works, it reaches to the very soul and conscience, the defiled soul, defiled with sin, which is a dead work, proceeds from spiritual death, and tends to death eternal. As the touching a dead body gave legal uncleanness, so meddling with sin gives a moral and real defilement, fixes it in the very soul; but the blood of Christ has that efficacy as to purge it out. 2. It is sufficient to enable us to serve the living God, not only by purging away that guilt that separates between God and sinners, but by sanctifying and renewing the soul through the gracious influences of the holy Spirit, purchased by Christ for this purpose, that we might be enabled to serve the living God in a lively manner.

15. And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator: 17. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth. 18. Whereupon, neither the first testament was dedicated

cated without blood. 19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, 20. Saying, *This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* 21. Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

In these verses the apostle considers the gospel under the notion of a will or testament, the new or last will and testament of Christ, and shews the necessity and efficacy of the blood of Christ to make this testament valid and effectual.

1. The gospel is here considered as a testament, the new and last will and testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is observable that the solemn transactions that pass between God and man are sometimes called a covenant, here a testament. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties about things that are in their own power, or may be so; and this either with or without a mediator; and this agreement takes effect at such time and in such manner as is therein declared. A testament is a voluntary act and deed of a single person duly executed and witnessed, bestowing legacies on such legatees as are described and characterised by the testator, and which can only take effect upon his death. Now observe,

1. Christ is the mediator of a new testament, *ver. 15.* and he is so for several ends and purposes here mentioned. 1. To redeem persons from their transgressions committed against the law or first testament, which makes every transgression a forfeiture of liberty, and makes men debtors, and slaves or prisoners, that need to be redeemed. 2. To qualify all those that are effectually called, to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. These are the great legacies that Christ by his last will and testament has bequeathed to the true characterised legatees.

2. To make this new testament effectual, it was necessary that Christ should die; the legacies accrue by means of death. This he proves by two arguments. 1. From the general nature of every will and testamentary disposition, *ver. 16.* Where a testament is, where it acts and operates, there must of necessity be the death of the testator; till then the property is still in the testator's hand, and he has power to revoke and cancel, or alter his will as he pleases; so that no estate, no right is conveyed by will, till the testator's death hath made it unalterable and effectual.

2. From the particular method that was taken by Moses in the ratification of the first testament, which was not done without blood, *ver. 18, 19, &c.* All men by sin were become guilty before God, hath forfeited their inheritance, their liberties, and their very lives into the hands of divine justice; but God being willing to shew the greatness of his mercy, proclaimed a covenant of grace, and ordered it to be typically administered under the Old Testament, but not without the blood and life of the creature; and God accepted the blood of bulls and goats, as typifying the blood of Christ; and by these means the covenant of grace was ratified under the former dispensation. The method taken by Moses according to the direction he had received from God, is here particularly related.

1. Moses spoke every precept to all the people according to the law, *ver. 19.* He published to them the tenor of the covenant; both the duties required, the rewards promised to those that did their duty, and the punishment threatened against the transgressors, and he called for their consent to the terms of the covenant; and this in an express manner.

2. Then he took the blood of calves, and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and applied this blood by sprinkling it. This blood and water signified the blood and water that came out of our Saviour's pierced side, for justification and sanctification, and also shadowing forth the two sacraments of the New Testament, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, with scarlet wool, signifying the righteousness of Christ with which we must be clothed; the hyssop signifying that faith by which we must apply all. Now with these Moses sprinkled, 1. The book of the law and covenant, to shew that the covenant of grace is confirmed by the blood of Christ, and made effectual to our good. 2. The people, intimating that the shedding of the blood of Christ will be no advantage to us, if it be not applied to us. And the sprinkling of both the book and the people, signified the mutual consent of both parties, God and man, and their mutual engagements to each other in this covenant through Christ; Moses at the same time using these words, *This is the blood of the Testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* This blood typifying the blood of Christ, is the ratification of the covenant of grace to all true believers. 3. He sprinkled the tabernacle of all the utensils of it, intimating, that all the sacrifices offered up, and services performed there, were accepted only through the blood of Christ, which procures the remission of that iniquity that cleaves to our holy things, which could not have been remitted but by that atoning blood.

23. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* 24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true;* but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often as the high-priest entereth into the holy place, every year with blood of others: 26. (For then must he often have sacrificed since the foundation of the world) but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

In this last part of the chapter the apostle goes on to tell us, what the Holy Ghost has signified to us by the legal purifications of the patterns of the things in heaven; inferring from thence the necessity of better sacrifices to consecrate the heavenly things themselves.

1. The necessity of purifying the patterns of the things in heaven, *ver. 23.* This necessity arises both from the divine appointment, which must always be obeyed, and from the reason of that appointment, which was to preserve a proper resemblance between the things typifying and the things ty-

pified. It is observable here, that the sanctuary of God on earth is a pattern of heaven, and communion with God in his sanctuary is to his people a heaven upon earth.

2. The necessity that the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices than of bulls and goats; the things themselves are better than the patterns, and must therefore be consecrated with better sacrifices: These heavenly things are the privileges of the gospel-state, begun in grace, perfected in glory; these must be ratified by a suitable sanction or consecration; and that was the blood of Christ. Now it is very evident that the sacrifices of Christ are vastly better than those of the law. 1. From the places in which the sacrifices under the law, and those under the gospel were offered: Those under the law was the holy place made with hands, which are but figures of the true sanctuary, *ver. 24.* Christ's sacrifice, though offered upon earth, was by himself carried up into heaven, and is there presented in a way of daily intercession; for he appears in the presence of God for us. He is gone to heaven not only to enjoy the rest, and receive the honour due to him, but to appear in the presence of God for us, to present our persons and our performances, to answer and rebuke our adversary and accuser, to secure our interest, to perfect all our affairs, and to prepare a place for us. 2. From the sacrifices themselves, *ver. 26.* Those under the law were the lives and blood of other creatures of a different nature from the offerers: The blood of beasts a thing of small value, and would have been of none at all in this matter, had it not had a typical respect to the blood of Christ; but the sacrifice of Christ was the oblation of himself; he offered his own blood, truly called, by virtue of the hypostatical union, the blood of God; and therefore of infinite value. 3. From the frequent repetition of the legal sacrifices. This shewed the imperfection of that law; but it is the honour and perfection of Christ's sacrifice, that it being once offered, was sufficient to all the ends of it; and indeed it would have been absurd; for then he must have been still dying and rising again, and ascending, and then again descending and dying, &c. and the great work had been always *in fieri*, always a-doing, and always to do, but never finished; which would be as contrary to reason as it is to revelation; and to the dignity of his person; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The gospel is the last dispensation of the grace of God to men. 4. From the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, the legal sacrifices could not of themselves put away sin; neither procure pardon for it, nor power against it. Sin would still have lain upon us, and had dominion over us, but Jesus Christ by one sacrifice has made an end of sin; he has destroyed the works of the devil.

3. The apostle illustrates the argument from the appointment of God concerning men, *ver. 27, 28.* and observes something like it in the appointment of God concerning Christ.

1. The appointment of God concerning men, contains in it two things. 1. That they must once die, or however undergo a change equivalent to death. It is an awful thing to die, to have the vital knot loosed or cut asunder, all relations here dropt as once; an end put to our probation, and preparation state, and to enter into another world. It is a great work, and it is a work that can be but once done, and therefore had need to be well done. This is a matter of comfort to the godly, that they shall die well, and die but once; but it is a matter of terror to the wicked, that die in their sins, that they cannot return again to do that great work better. 2. It is appointed to men, that after death they shall come to judgment, to a particular judgment immediately after death; for the soul returns to God as to its judge, to be determined to its eternal state; and men shall be brought to the general judgment at the end of the world. This is the unalterable decree of God, concerning men, they must die, and they must be judged: It is appointed for them, and it is to be believed and seriously considered by them.

2. The appointment of God concerning Christ, bearing some resemblance to the other. 1. He must be once offered to bear the sins of many, of all the Father had given to him, of all that should believe in his name: He was not offered for any sin of his own, he was wounded for our transgressions. God laid on him the iniquity of all his people; and these are many, though not so many as the rest of mankind; yet when they are all gathered to him, he will be the first-born among many brethren. 2. It is appointed that Christ shall appear the second time without sin, to the salvation of those that look for him. 1. He will then appear without sin: at his first appearance, though he had no sin of his own, yet he stood charged with the sins of many; he was the Lamb of God that bore upon him the sins of the world; and then he appeared in the form of sinful flesh: But his second appearance will be without any such charge upon him, he having fully discharged it before, and then his visage shall not be marred, but shall be exceeding glorious. 2. This will be to the salvation of all that look for him, he will then perfect their holiness, their happiness; their number shall then be accomplished, and their salvation completed. Observe, It is the distinguishing character of true believers that they are looking for Christ; they look to him by faith; they look for him by hope and holy desires. They look for him in every duty, in every ordinance, in every providence now; and they expect his second coming, and are preparing for it; and though it will be sudden destruction to the rest of the world, that scoff at the report of it, it will be eternal salvation to those that look for it.

CHAP. X.

The apostle knew very well the Hebrews to whom he wrote, were strangely fond of the Levitical dispensation, and therefore he fills his mouth with arguments to wean them from it; and in order thereto proceeds in this chapter, 1. To run down and lay low the whole of that priesthood and sacrifice, ver. 1—7. 2. He raises and exalts the priesthood of Christ very high, that he might effectually recommend him and his gospel to them, ver. 7—19. 3. He shews to believers the honours and dignities of their state, and calls them to suitable duties, ver. 19, to the end.

1. **F**OR the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. 2. For then, would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. 3. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Here the apostle, by the direction of the Spirit of God sets himself to run down and lay low the Levitical dispensation; for though it was of divine appointment, and very excellent and useful in its time and place, yet when it was set up in competition with Christ; to whom it was only designed to lead the people, it was very proper and necessary to shew the weakness and imperfection of it, which the apostle does effectually from several arguments. As,

1. That the law had a shadow, and but a shadow, of good things to come; and who would doat upon a shadow, though of good things, especially when the substance is come? Observe, 1. The things of Christ and the gospel are good things; they are the best things; they are best in themselves, and the best for us: They are realities of an excellent nature. 2. These good things were under the Old Testament good things to come, not clearly discovered, nor fully enjoyed. 3. That the Jews then had but the shadow of the good things of Christ, some adumbrations of them; we under the gospel have the substance.

2. That the law was not the very image of the good things to come. An image is an exact draught of the thing represented thereby: The law did not go so far, but was only a shadow, as the image of a person in a looking-glass is a much more perfect representation than his shadow upon the wall. The law was a very rough draught of the great design of divine grace, and therefore not to be so much doated on.

3. The legal sacrifices being offered year by year, could never make the comers thereunto perfect; for then there would have been an end of offering them, ver. 1, 2. Could they have satisfied the demands of justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity; could they have purified and pacified conscience, then had they ceased, as being no further necessary; since the offerers would have had no more sin lying upon their consciences. But this was not the case, after one day of atonement was over, the sinner would fall again into one fault or other, and so there would be need of another day of atonement, and of one every year besides the daily ministrations. Whereas now under the gospel, the atonement is perfect, and not to be repeated; and the sinner once pardoned, is ever pardoned as to his state, and only needs to renew his repentance and faith, that he may have a comfortable sense of a continued pardon.

4. As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should, ver. 4. There was an essential defect in them. 1. They were not of the same nature with us that sinned. 2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts done to the justice and government of God, as they were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable. They were much less of the same nature that was offended, and nothing less than the nature that was offended could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for the offence. 3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

5. There was a time fixed and foretold by the great God; and that time was now come when these legal sacrifices would be no longer accepted by him, or useful to men. God never did desire them for themselves, and now he abrogated them; and therefore to adhere to them now, would be resisting God and rejecting him. This time of the repeal of the Levitical laws was foretold by David, *Psalms* xl. 7. and is recited here as now come. Thus industriously does the apostle lay low the Mosaic dispensation.

7. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. 8. Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, (which are offered by the law;) 9. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; 13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15. *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he hath said before, 16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: 17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Here the apostle raiseth up and exalteth the Lord Jesus Christ, as high as he had laid the Levitical priesthood low. He recommends Christ to them as the true high-priest, the true atoning sacrifice, the antitype of all the rest: And this he illustrates,

1. From the purpose and promise of God concerning Christ, which is frequently recorded in the volume of the book of God, ver. 7. God had not only decreed, but declared by Moses and the prophets, that Christ should come and be the great high-priest of the church, and should offer up a perfect and perfecting sacrifice. It was written of Christ in the beginning of the book of God, that *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*; and the Old Testament abounds with prophecies concerning Christ. Now since he is the person so often promised, so much spoken of, so long expected by the people of God, he ought to be received with great honour and gratitude.

2. From what God had done in preparing a body for Christ, that is an human nature, that he might be qualified to be our redeemer and advocate; uniting the two natures in his own person, he was a fit mediator to go between God and man; a day's-man to lay his hand upon both, a peacemaker, to reconcile them, and an everlasting band of union between God and the creature: As *Psalms* xl. 6. *Mine ears hast thou opened*, i. e. thou hast fully instructed me, furnished and fitted me for the work, and engaged me in it. Now a Saviour thus provided and prepared by God himself in so extraordinary a manner, ought to be received with great affection and gladness.

3. From that readiness and willingness that Christ discovered to engage

in this work, when no other sacrifice would be accepted, ver. 7, 8, 9. when no lesser sacrifice would be a proper satisfaction to the justice of God than that of Christ himself, then Christ voluntarily came in to it. *Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O God!* Let thy curse fall upon me, but let these go their way: Father, I delight to fulfil thy counsels, and my covenant with thee for them; I delight to perform all thy promises, to fulfil all the prophecies. This should endear Christ and our bibles to us, that in Christ we have the fulfilling of the scriptures.

4. From the errand and design upon which Christ came; and that was to do the will of God, not only as a prophet to reveal the will of God, not only as a king to give forth divine laws, but as a priest to satisfy the demands of justice, and to fulfil all righteousness. Christ came to do the will of God in two instances. 1. In taking away the first priesthood, which God had no pleasure in; not only taking away the curse of the covenant of works, and cancelling the sentence denounced against us as sinners, but taking away the insufficient typical priesthood, and blotting out the handwriting of ceremonial ordinances, and nailing it to his cross. 2. In establishing the second, that is, his own priesthood and the everlasting gospel, the most pure and perfect dispensation of the covenant of grace; this is the great design upon which the heart of God was set from all eternity. The will of God centers and terminates in it; and it is not more agreeable to the will of God, than it is advantageous to the souls of men; for it is by this will that we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, ver. 10. Observe, 1. What is the fountain of all that Christ has done for his people, the sovereign will and grace of God. 2. How we come to partake of what Christ has done for us; and that is, by being sanctified, converted, effectually called, wherein we are united to Christ, and so partake of the benefits of his redemption; and this sanctification is owing to that oblation he made of himself to God.

5. From the perfect efficacy of the priesthood of Christ, ver. 14. By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified; he has and will perfectly deliver those that are brought over to him, from all the guilt, and power, and punishment of sin, and will put them into the sure possession of perfect holiness and felicity. This is what the Levitical priesthood could never do; and if we indeed are aiming at a perfect state, we must receive the Lord Jesus as the only high-priest that can bring us to that state.

6. From the place to which our Lord Jesus is now exalted, the honour he has there, and the further honour he shall have, ver. 12, 13. *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.* Here observe, 1. To what honour Christ, as man and mediator, is exalted to the right hand of God, the seat of power, and interest, and activity. The giving hand, all the favours that God bestows on his people are handed to them by Christ; the receiving hand, all the duties that God accepts from men are presented by Christ; the working hand, all the kingdoms of providence and grace is administered by Christ; and therefore this is the highest post of honour. 2. How did Christ come to this honour? Not merely by the purpose or donation of the Father, but by his own merit and purchase, as a reward due to his sufferings; and as he can never be deprived of an honour so much his due, so he will never quit it, nor cease to employ it for his people's good. 3. How does he enjoy this honour? Even with the greatest satisfaction and rest; he is for ever sat down there. The Father acquiesces and is satisfied in him; he is satisfied in his Father's will and presence; this is his rest for ever; here he will dwell; for he has both desired and deferred it. 4. He has further expectations which shall not be disappointed; for they are grounded upon the promise of the Father, who hath said unto him, *Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*, *Psalms* cx. 1. One would think such a person as Christ could have no enemies except in hell; but it is certain he has enemies on earth, and very many, and very inveterate ones. Let not Christians then wonder that they have enemies, though they desire to live peaceably with all men. But Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool: some by converting, others by confusion; and which way soever it be, Christ will be honoured; of this Christ is assured; and this he is expecting; and his people should rejoice in the expectation of it; for when his enemies are subdued, their enemies that are so for his sake shall be subdued also.

And lastly, The apostle recommends Christ from the witness the Holy Ghost has given in the scriptures concerning him, and this relates chiefly to what should be the happy fruit and consequence of his humiliation and sufferings, which in general is that new and gracious covenant that is founded upon his satisfaction, and sealed by his blood, ver. 15. *Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness*, &c. The passage is cited from *Ser.* xxxi. 31. in which covenant God promises, 1. That God would pour out his Spirit upon his people, so as to give them skill, and will, and power to obey his word; he will put his laws in their hearts, and write them in their minds, ver. 16. This will make their duty plain, easy, and pleasant. 2. Their sins and iniquities he will remember no more, ver. 17. which will alone shew the riches of divine grace, and the sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction, that it needs not be repeated, ver. 18. For there shall be no more remembrance of sin against true believers, either to shame them now, or to condemn them hereafter. This was much more than the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices could effect.

And now we have gone through the doctrinal part of the epistle, in which we have met with many things dark and difficult to be understood, which we must impute to the weakness and dulness of our own minds. The apostle now proceeds to apply this great doctrine, so as to influence their affections, and direct their practice, setting before them the dignities and duties of the gospel state.

19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; 20. By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; 21. And having an high-priest over the house of God: 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised.) 24. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works: 25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. 26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. 27. But a certain fearful

fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28. He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: 29. Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompence, saith he Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people, 31. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions: 33. Partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. 35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36. For ye have need of patience: that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38. Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Here the apostle sets forth,

1. The dignities of the gospel state. It is fit that believers should know the honours and privileges that Christ has procured them, and while they take the comfort, they may give him the glory of all. The privileges are, 1. Boldness to enter into the holiest. They have access to God, light to direct them, liberty of spirit and of speech to conform to the direction; they have a right to the privilege, and a readiness for it; assistance to use and improve it, and assurance of acceptance and advantage. They may enter into the gracious presence of God in his holy oracles, ordinances, providences, and covenant, and so into communion with God, where they receive communications from him, till they are prepared to enter into his glorious presence in heaven. 2. An high-priest over the house of God, even this blessed Jesus, who presides over the church militant and every member thereof on earth, and over the church triumphant in heaven. God is willing to dwell with men on earth, and to have them dwell with him in heaven; but fallen man cannot dwell with God without an high-priest, who is the mediator of reconciliation here, and of fruition hereafter.

2. The apostle tells us the way and means by which Christians enjoy such privileges, and in general declares it to be by the blood of Jesus, by the merit of that blood which he offered up to God as an atoning sacrifice: he has purchased for all that believe in him free access to God in the ordinances of his grace here, and in the kingdom of his glory. This blood being sprinkled on the conscience, chases away slavish fear, and gives the believer assurance both of his safety and welcome into the divine presence. Now the apostle having given this general account of the way by which we have access to God, he enters further into the particulars of it, *ver. 20.* As, 1. It is the only way; there is no other left but this; the first way to the tree of life is and has been long shut up. 2. It is a new way both in opposition to the covenant of works, and to the antiquated dispensation of the Old Testament; it is *via novissima*, the last way that will ever be opened to men; they that will not enter in this way, exclude themselves for ever; it is a way that will always be effectual. 3. It is a living way. It would be death to attempt to come to God in the way of the covenant of works; but this way we may come to God and live. It is by a living Saviour, who, though he was dead, is alive; and it is a way that gives life and lively hope to those that enter into it. 4. It is a way that Christ has consecrated for us through the vail, that is, his flesh. The vail in the tabernacle and temple signified the body of Christ; when he died, the vail of the temple was rent in sunder, and this was at the time of the evening sacrifice, and gave the people a surprising view into the holy of holies, which they never had before. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour: his death is to us the way of life; to those that believe this he will be precious.

2. The apostle proceeds to shew the Hebrews the duties which they were obliged to upon the account of these privileges conferred upon them in such an extraordinary way, *ver. 22, 23, &c.*

1. They must draw near to God, and that in a right manner. They must draw near to God, since such a way of access and return to God is opened; it would be the greatest ingratitude and contempt of God and Christ still to keep at a distance from him. They must draw near by conversion and by taking hold of his covenant; they must draw near in all holy conversation, like Enoch walking with God? they must draw near in humble adorations, worshipping at his footstool; they must draw near in holy dependence, and in a strict observation of the divine conduct towards them; they must draw near in conformity to God, and communion with him, living under his blessed influence, still endeavouring to get nearer and nearer, till they come to dwell in his presence; but they must see to it, that they make their approach to God after a right manner. 1. With a true heart, without any allowed guile or hypocrisy. God is the searcher of hearts, and he requires truth in the inward parts. Sincerity is our gospel perfection; though not our justifying righteousness. 2. In full assurance of faith; with a faith grown up to a full persuasion that when we come to God by Christ we shall have audience and acceptance. We should lay aside all sinful distrust; without faith we cannot please God; and the stronger our faith is, the more glory we give to God. And, 3. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by a believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls. They may be cleansed from guilt, from filth, and from sinful fear and torment, from all aversion to God and duty, from ignorance, and error, and superstition, and whatever evils the consciences of men are subject to by reason of sin. 4. Our bodies washed with pure water, *i. e.* with water of baptism, by which we are recorded among the disciples of Christ, members of his mystical body, or with the sanctifying virtue of the Holy Spirit reforming and regulating our outward conversa-

tion as well as our inward frame; cleansing from the filthiness of the flesh, as well as of the spirit. The priests under the law were to wash, before they went into the presence of the Lord to offer before him. There must be a due preparation for making our approaches to God.

2. The apostle exhorts believers to hold fast the profession of their faith, *ver. 23.* where we observe, 1. The duty itself, to hold fast the profession of our faith, *i. e.* to be well apprised in all the truths and ways of the gospel; to get fast hold of them, and to keep that hold against all temptation and opposition. Our spiritual enemies will do what they can to wrest our faith, and hope, and holiness, and comfort, out of our hands, but we must hold fast our religion as our best treasure. 2. The manner how we must do this, without wavering, without doubting, without dallying with temptation to apostasy. Having once settled these great things between God and our souls, we must be steadfast and immovable. They that begin to waver in matters of Christian faith and practice, are in danger of falling away. 3. The motive or reason enforcing this duty; he is faithful that hath promised. God has made great and precious promises to believers; and he is a faithful God, true to his word; there is no falseness or fickleness with him, and there should be none with us; his faithfulness should excite and encourage us to be faithful, and we must depend more upon his promises to us, than upon our promises made with him, and we must plead with him the promise of grace sufficient.

4. We have the means prescribed for preventing our apostasy, and promoting our fidelity and perseverance, *ver. 24, 25, &c.* He mentions several, as,

1. That we should consider one another *to provoke to love and to good works.* Christians ought to have a tender consideration and concern for one another; they should affectionately consider what their several wants, and weaknesses, and temptations are; and they should do this not to reproach one another, not to provoke one another to anger, but to love and good works, calling upon ourselves and one another to love God and Christ more; to love duty and holiness more; to love our brethren in Christ more, and to do all the good offices of Christian affection both to the bodies and souls of each other. A good example given to others is the best and more effectual provocation to love and good works.

2. *Not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together,* *ver. 25.* It is the will of Christ that his disciples should assemble themselves together, sometimes more privately for conference and prayer, and in public for hearing and joining in all the ordinances of gospel worship. There were in the apostles times, and should be in every age, Christian assemblies for the worship of God, and for mutual edification. And it seems even in those times there were some that forsook these assemblies, and so began to apostatize from religion itself. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a good means of steadiness and perseverance; hereby their hearts and hands are mutually strengthened.

3. To exhort one another, to exhort ourselves and each other, to warn ourselves and one another of the sin and danger of backsliding, to put ourselves and our fellow Christians in mind of our duty, of our failures and corruptions, to watch over one another, and be jealous of ourselves and one another with a godly jealousy. This managed with a true gospel spirit, would be the best and most cordial friendship.

4. That we should observe the approaching of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence, so much the more as ye see the day approaching. Christians ought to observe the signs of the times, such as God has foretold them of. There was a day approaching, a terrible day to the Jewish nation, when their city should be destroyed, and the body of the people rejected of God for rejecting Christ. This would be a day of dispersion and temptation to the chosen remnant. Now the apostle puts them upon observing what signs there were of the approach of such a terrible day, and be the more constant in meeting together and exhorting one another, that they might be the better prepared for such a day. There is a trying day coming on us all; the day of our death, and we should observe all the signs of its approaching, and improve them to greater watchfulness and diligence in duty.

5. After having mentioned these means of establishment, the apostle proceeds, in the close of the chapter, to enforce his exhortations to perseverance, and against apostasy, by many very weighty considerations, *ver. 26, 27, &c.*

1. From the description he gives of the sin of apostasy. It is *sinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth.* Sinning wilfully against that truth we have had convincing evidence of. This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls, they have been ready to conclude that every wilful sin after conviction and against knowledge is the unpardonable sin: But this has been their infirmity and error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ the only Saviour; despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier; and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this after they have known, owned, and professed the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously. This is the great transgression; the apostle seems to refer to the law concerning presumptuous sinners, *Numb. xv. 30, 31.* They were to be cut off.

2. From the dreadful doom of such apostates. 1. There remains no more sacrifice for such sins; no other Christ to come to save such; they sin against the last resort and remedy. There were some sins under the law, for which no sacrifices were provided; But yet if they that committed them did truly repent, though they must not escape temporal death, they might escape eternal destruction; for Christ would come and make atonement. But now those under the gospel that will not accept of Christ, that they may be saved by him, have no other refuge left them. 2. There remains only for them a certain fearful looking for of judgment, *ver. 27.* Some think this refers to the dreadful destruction of the Jewish church and state, but certainly it refers also to the utter destruction that waits for all obstinate apostates at death and judgment, when the judge will discover a fiery indignation against them that will devour the adversaries: they will be consigned over to the devouring fire, and to everlasting burnings. Of this destruction God gives some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful foreboding in their own consciences; a dreadful looking for it; with a despair of ever being able either to endure or escape it.

3. From the methods of divine justice with those that despised Moses's law, *i. e.* sinned presumptuously, despising his authority, his threatenings, and power. These, when convicted by two or three witnesses, were put to death; they died without mercy, a temporal death. Observe, Wise governors should be careful to keep up the credit of their government, and the authority of the laws, by punishing presumptuous offenders: But then in such cases there should be good evidence of the fact. Thus God ordained in Moses's law; and from hence the apostle infers a heavy doom that will fall upon those that apostatize from Christ: And here he refers himself to their own consciences, to judge how much sorer punishment the despisers of Christ (after they have professed to know him) are like to undergo; and they may judge of the greatness of the punishment by the greatness of the sin.

1. They have trodden under foot the Son of God. To trample upon an ordinary person shews intolerable insolence; to treat a person of honour in that vile manner is insufferable; but to deal thus with the Son of God, who himself is God, must be the highest provocation: to trample upon his person, denying him to be the Messiah; to trample upon his authority, and undermine his kingdom; to trample upon his members as the off-scouring of all things, and not fit to live in the world, what punishment can be too great for such men?

2. They have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. The blood of Christ, with which the covenant was purchased and sealed, and wherewith Christ himself was consecrated, or wherewith the apostate was sanctified, that is baptized, visibly initiated into the new covenant by baptism, and admitted to the Lord's Supper. Observe, There is a kind of sanctification which persons may partake of, and yet fall away: They may be distinguished by common gifts and graces; by an outward profession; by a form of godliness; a course of duties, and a set of privileges, and yet fall away finally. Men that have seemed before to have the blood of Christ in high esteem, may come to account it an unholy thing, no better than the blood of a malefactor, though it was the world's ransom, and every drop of it of infinite value.

3. They have done despite unto the Spirit of grace; the Spirit that is graciously given to men, and that works grace wherever it is; the Spirit of grace, that should be regarded and attended to with the greatest care: This Spirit they have grieved, resisted, quenched, yea done despite to him: which is the highest act of wickedness, and makes the case of the sinner desperate; refusing to have the gospel salvation applied to him. Now he leaves it to the consciences of all, appeals to universal reason and equity, whether such aggravated crimes ought not to receive a suitable punishment, a sorer punishment than they had that died without mercy? But what punishment can be sorer, than to die without mercy? I answer, to die by mercy, by that mercy and grace which they have despised; how dreadful is the case, when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance?

4. From the description we have in the scripture of the nature of God's vindictive justice, ver. 30. we know that he has said, Vengeance is mine, &c. This is taken out of *Psal. xciv.* 1. Vengeance belongs unto me; the terrors of the Lord are known both by revelation and reason. Vindictive justice is a glorious, though terrible attribute of God; it belongs to him, and he will use and execute it upon the heads of such sinners as despise his grace; he will avenge himself, and his Son, and Spirit, and covenant, upon apostates. And how dreadful then will their case be? The other quotation is from *Deut. xxxii.* 36. The Lord will judge his people; he will search and try his visible church, and will discover and detect those that say they are Jews, but are not; he will make them of the synagogue of Satan, and separate the precious from the vile, and will punish the sinners in Zion with the greatest severity. Now they that know him who hath said, *Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense*, must needs conclude, as the apostle does, ver. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; they that know the joy that results from the favour of God, can thereby judge of the power and dread of his vindictive wrath.

Observe here what will be the eternal misery of impenitent sinners and apostates; they shall fall into the hands of the living God: Their punishment shall come from God's own hand; he takes them into the hand of his justice; he will deal with them himself; their greatest misery will be the immediate impressions of divine wrath on the soul. When he punishes them by creatures, the instrument abates something of the force of the blow; but when he does it by his own hand, it is infinite misery. This they shall have at God's hand; they shall lie down in sorrow; their destruction shall come from his glorious powerful presence; when they make their woeful bed in hell, they will find that God is there, and his presence will be their greatest terror and torment. And he is a living God; he lives for ever, and will punish for ever.

5. He presses them to perseverance, by putting them in mind of their former sufferings for Christ, ver. 32. *But call to mind the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.* In the early days of the gospel, there was a very hot persecution raised up against the professors of the Christian religion, and the believing Hebrews had their share of it; he would have them to remember,

1. When they had suffered; in former days after they were illuminated; that is, as soon as God had breathed life into their souls, and caused divine light to spring up in their minds, and taken them into his favour and covenant; then earth and hell combined all their force against them. Here observe a natural state is a dark state, and those that continue in that state meet with no disturbance from Satan and the world; but a state of grace is a state of light, and therefore the powers of darkness will violently oppose it. They that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.

2. What they suffered; they endured a great fight of affliction; many and various afflictions united together against them, and they had a great conflict with them. Many are the troubles of the righteous. 1. They were afflicted in themselves. In their own persons they were made guinea-pigs, spectacles to the world, angels, and men, *1 Cor. iv.* 9. In their names and reputation, ver. 33. by many reproaches. Christians ought to value their reputation; and they do so especially because the reputation of religion is concerned: This makes reproach a great affliction; they were afflicted in their estates, by the spoiling of their goods, by fines and forfeitures. 2. They were afflicted in the afflictions of their brethren; partly while ye became companions of those that were so used. The Christian spirit is a sympathizing spirit, not a selfish spirit, but a compassionate spirit; it makes every Christian's suffering our own, puts us upon pitying them, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. Christians are one body, animated by one spirit, embarked in one common cause and interest, and are the children of that God who is afflicted in all the afflictions of his people. If one member of the body suffers, all the rest suffer with it: And the apostle takes particular notice how they had sympathized with him, ver. 34. *Ye had compassion on me in my bonds.* We must thankfully acknowledge the compassions our Christian friends have shewed for us under our afflictions.

3. How they had suffered. They had been mightily supported under their former sufferings; they took their sufferings patiently, and not only so, but joyfully received from God as a favour and honour conferred upon them, that they should be thought worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. God can strengthen his suffering people with all might in the inner man, to all patience and long-suffering, and that with joyfulness, *Col. i.* 11.

4. What it was that enabled them thus to bear up under their sufferings. They knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Observe, 1. The happiness of the saints in heaven is substance, something of real weight and worth: All things here are but shadows. 2. It is a better substance than any thing they can have or lose here. 3. It is an enduring substance, it will out-live time, and run parallel with eternity; they can never spend it; their enemies can never take it from them; as they did their earthly goods. 4. This will make a rich amends for all they can lose and suffer here. In heaven they shall have a

better life, a better estate, better liberty, better society, better hearts, better work, every thing better. 5. That Christians should know this in themselves, they should get the assurance of it in themselves: The Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits, for the assured knowledge of this will help them to endure any fight of afflictions they may be encountered with in this world.

6. He presses them to persevere, from that recompence of reward that waited for all faithful Christians, ver. 35. *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.* Where, 1. He exhorts them not to cast away their confidence, that is their holy courage and boldness, but to hold fast that profession for which they had suffered so much before, and borne those sufferings so well. 2. He encourages them to this by assuring them that the reward of their holy confidence would be very great; it carries a present reward in it, in holy peace and joy, and much of God's presence and his power visiting upon them; and it shall have a great recompence of reward hereafter. 3. Shews them how necessary a grace the grace of patience is in our present state, ver. 36. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise*; that is, this promised reward. Observe, The greatest part of the saints happiness is in promise; that they must first do the will of God before they receive the promise, and that after they have done the will of God, they have need of patience to wait for the time when the promise shall be fulfilled; they have need of patience to live till God calls them away. It is a trial of the patience of Christians to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for the reward, till God's time to give it them is come. We must be God's waiting servants, when we can be no longer his working servants; they that have had and exercised much patience already, must have and exercise more till they die. 4. To help their patience, he assures them of the near approach of Christ's coming to deliver and to reward them, ver. 37. *For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* He will soon come to them at death, and put an end to all their sufferings, and give them a crown of life. He will soon come to judgment, and put an end to the sufferings of the whole church, (all his mystical body,) and give them an ample and glorious reward in the most public manner. There is an appointed time for both, and beyond that time he will not tarry, *Hab. ii.* 3. The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over.

7. And lastly, He presses them to persevere, by telling them that this is their distinguishing character, and will be their happiness; whereas apostasy is the reproach, and will be the ruin of all that are guilty of it, ver. 38, 39. *Now the just shall live by faith, &c.* 1. It is the honourable character of just men, that in times of the greatest afflictions, they can live by faith; they can live upon the assured persuasion they have of the truth of God's promises. Faith puts life and vigour into them; they can trust God, and live upon him, and wait his time; and as their faith maintains their spiritual life now, it should be crowned with eternal life hereafter. 2. That apostasy is the mark and the brand of those in whom God takes no pleasure; and it is the cause of God's severe displeasure and anger. God never was pleased with the formal profession and external duties and services of such as do not persevere; he saw the hypocrisy of their hearts then; and he is greatly provoked when their formality in religion ends in an open apostasy from religion; he beholds them with great displeasure; they are an offence to him. 3. The apostle concludes with declaring his good hope concerning himself and those Hebrews, that they should not forfeit the character and happiness of the just, and fall under the brand and misery of the wicked, ver. 39. *But we are not, &c. q. d.* I hope we are not of them who draw back. I hope you and I, who have met with great trials already, and have been supported under them by the grace of God strengthening our faith, shall not be at any time left to ourselves; to draw back to perdition; but that God will still keep us by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. Observe, 1. Professors may go a great way, and after all draw back; and that drawing back from God is drawing on to perdition: The further we depart from God, the nearer we approach to ruin. 2. Those that have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past, have reason to hope, that the same grace shall be sufficient to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience, even the salvation of their souls: If we live by faith, and die in faith, our souls are safe for ever.

C H A P. XI.

The apostle having in the close of the foregoing chapter recommended the grace of faith and a life of faith as the best preservative against apostasy; he now enlarges upon the nature and fruits of this excellent grace. 1. The nature of it, and the honour it reflects upon all that live in the exercise of it, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. The great examples we have in the Old Testament of those that lived by faith, and did and suffered extraordinary things by the strength of this grace, ver. 4—39. And, 3. The advantages that we have in the gospel for the exercise of this grace above what they had that lived in the times of the Old Testament, ver. 39, 40.

1. **N**OW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2. For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Here we have, 1. A definition or description of the grace of faith in two parts. 1. *It is the substance of things hoped for.* Faith and hope go together; and the same things that are the object of our hope are the object of our faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation, that God will perform all that he has promised to us in Christ; and this persuasion is so strong, that it gives the soul a kind of possession and present fruition of those things; gives them a subsistence in the soul, by the first-fruits and foretastes of them: So that believers in the exercise of faith are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Christ dwells in the soul by faith, and the soul is filled with the fulness of God, as far as his present measure will admit; he experiences a substantial reality in the object of faith. 2. *It is the evidence of things not seen.* Faith demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things that cannot be discerned by the eye of the body. Faith is the firm assent of the soul to the divine revelation and every part of it, and sets to its seal that God is true. It is a full approbation of all that God has revealed, as holy, just, and good, and it helps the soul to make application of all to itself with suitable affections and endeavours, and so it is designed to serve the believer instead of sight, and to be to the soul all that the senses are to the body; That faith is but opinion or fancy, and does not realize invisible things to the soul, and excite the soul to act agreeably to the nature and importance of them.

2. An account of the honour it reflects upon all those that have lived in the

the exercise of it, ver. 2. *By it the elders obtained a good report*; the ancient believers that lived in the first ages of the world. Observe, 1. That true faith is an old grace, and has the best plea to antiquity. It is not a new invention, a modern fancy; it is a grace that has been planted in the soul of man ever since the covenant of grace was published in the world; and it has been practised from the beginning of the revelation; the eldest and best men that ever were in the world were believers. 2. That their faith was their honour; it reflected honour upon them; they were an honour to their faith, and their faith was an honour to them; it put them upon doing the things that were of good report, and God has taken care that a record shall be kept and report made of the excellent things they did in the strength of this grace: The genuine actings of faith will bear to be reported, and deserve to be reported, and will, when reported, redound to the honour of true believers.

3. We have here one of the first acts and articles of faith, which has a great influence on all the rest, and which is common to all believers in every age and part of the world, and that is the creation of the worlds by the word of God, not out of pre-existent matter, but out of nothing, ver. 3. The grace of faith has a retrospect as well as prospect; it looks not only forward to the end of the world, but back to the beginning of the world: By faith we understand much more of the formation of the world, than ever could be understood by the naked eye of natural reason: Faith is not a force upon the understanding, but a friend and a help to it. Now what does faith give us to understand concerning the worlds, that is, the upper, middle, and lower regions of the universe? 1. That these worlds were not eternal, nor did they produce themselves, but they were made by another. 2. That the maker of the worlds is God; he is the maker of all things: and whoever is so must be God. 3. That he made the world with great exactness: it was a framed work, in every thing duly adapted and disposed to answer its end, and to expel the persecutions of the Creator. 4. That God made the world by his word, that is, by his essential wisdom and eternal Son, and by his active will, saying, *Let it be done, and it was done*, Psalm xxxiii. 9. 5. That the world was thus framed out of nothing, out of no pre-existent matter, contrary to the received maxim, that out of nothing nothing can be made; which, though true of created power, can have no place with God, who can call things that are not as if they were, and command them into being. These things we understand by faith. The Bible gives us the truest and most exact account of the origin of all things, and we are to believe it, and not to wrest or run down the scripture account of the creation, because it does not suit with some fantastical hypotheses of our own, which has been in some learned but conceited men the first remarkable step towards infidelity, and has led them into many more.

4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh. 5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. 6. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 7. By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet; moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. 8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. 9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. 10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations: whose builder and maker is God. 11. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. 15. And truly if they had been mindful of that country, from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: 16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; 18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

The apostle having given us a more general account of the grace of faith, now proceeds to set before us some illustrious examples of it in the Old Testament times, and these may be divided into two classes: 1. Those whose names are not only mentioned, but the particular exercise and actings of their faith specified. 2. Those whose names are barely mentioned, and an account given in general of the exploits of their faith, which it is left to the reader to accommodate, and apply to the particular persons, from what he gathers up in the sacred story.

1. Those whose names are not only mentioned, but the particular trials and actings of their faith subjoined; and in these verses are included the several instances from Abel to Isaac.

1. The leading instance and example of faith here recorded is that of Abel. It is observable, the Spirit of God has not thought fit to say any thing here of the faith of our first parents; and yet the church of God has generally, by a pious charity, taken it for granted that God gave them repentance and faith in the promised seed: that he instructed them in the mystery of sacrificing, and that they instructed their children in it, and that they found mercy with God, after they had ruined themselves and all their posterity: But God has left the matter still under some doubt, as a warning to all that have great talents given to them, and a great trust reposed in them, that they do not prove unfaithful, since God would not enrol our first parents among the number of believers in this blessed calendar.

It begins with Abel, one of the first saints, and the first martyr for religion of all the sons of Adam, one that lived by faith, and died for it, and therefore a fit pattern for the Hebrews to imitate.

Observe, 1. What Abel did by faith, he offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, a more full and perfect sacrifice *synovia suavia*. Hence learn, 1. That, after the fall, God opened a new way for the children of men to return to him in religious worship. This is one of the first instances that is upon record of fallen men going in to worship God, and it is a wonder of mercy that all intercourse between God and man was not cut off by the fall. 2. That, after the fall, God must be worshipped by sacrifices, a way of worship which carries in it a confession of sin, and of the desert of sin, and a profession of faith in a Redeemer, who was to be a ransom for the souls of men. 3. That, from the beginning of this kind, there has been a remarkable difference between the worshippers; here were two persons, brethren, both go in to worship God, and yet there was a vast difference; Cain was the elder brother, but Abel has the preference: It is not seniority of birth, but grace that makes men truly honourable. The difference is observable in both their persons; Abel was an upright person, a righteous man, a true believer; Cain was a formalist, had not a principle of special grace; and in their principles, Abel acted under the power of faith, Cain only from the force of education, or natural conscience; and there was a very observable difference in their offerings; Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, brought the firstlings of the flock, acknowledging himself to be a sinner that deserved to die, and only hoped for mercy through the great sacrifice; Cain brought only a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a mere thank-offering, the fruit of the ground, which might, and perhaps must have been offered in innocency; here was no confession of sin, no regard to the ransom; this was an essential defect in Cain's offering. There will always be a difference between those that worship the true God; some will compass him about with lies, others will be faithful with the saints; some, like the Pharisee, will lean to their own righteousness, others, like the publican, will confess their sin, and cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ.

2. What Abel gained by his faith, the original record in Gen. iv. 4. *God had respect to Abel, and to his offering*; first to his person as gracious, then to his offering as proceeding from grace, especially from the grace of faith. In this place we are told, that he obtained by his faith some special advantages; as, 1. *Witness that he was righteous*, a justified, sanctified, and accepted person; this very probably was attested by fire from heaven, kindling and consuming his sacrifice. 2. *God gave witness to the righteousness of his person*, by testifying his acceptance of his gifts: When the fire, an emblem of God's justice, accepted the offering, it was a sign that the mercy of God accepted the offer for the sake of the great sacrifice. 3. *By it he being dead, yet speaketh*. He had the honour to leave behind him an instructive speaking case; and what does it speak to us? what should we learn from it? 1. That fallen man has leave to go in to worship God with hope of acceptance. 2. That if our persons and offerings be accepted, it must be through faith in the Messiah. 3. That acceptance with God is a peculiar and distinguishing favour. 4. That those who obtain this favour from God, must expect the envy and malice of the world. 5. That God will not suffer the injuries done to his people to remain unpunished, nor their sufferings unrewarded. These are very good and useful instructions, and yet the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel. 6. That God would not suffer Abel's faith to die with him, but would raise up others, that should obtain like precious faith; and so he did in a little time; for in the next verse we read,

2. *Of the faith of Enoch, ver. 5.* He is the second of those elders, that, through faith, have obtained a good report: And, first, what is here reported of him? Why, in this place, and in Gen. v. &c. we read, 1. *That he walked with God*, i. e. that he was really, eminently, actively, progressively, and perseveringly religious in his conformity to God, communion with God, and complacency in God. 2. *That he was translated that he should not see death*, not any part of him to be found upon earth; for God took him, soul and body, into heaven, as he will do those of the saints that shall be found alive at his second coming. 3. *That before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*. He had the evidence of it in his own conscience, and the Spirit of God witnessed with his spirit. Those that by faith walk with God in a sinful world, are pleasing to him, and he will give them marks of his favour, and put honour upon them.

2. What is here said of his faith? ver. 6. Why it is said, that *without this faith it is impossible to please God, without such a faith as helps us to walk with God, an active faith*, and that we cannot come to God, unless we believe he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him. 1. *He must believe that God is*, and that he is what he is, and what he has revealed himself to be in the scripture, i. e. a being of infinite perfections, subsisting in those persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Observe, The practical belief of the existence of God, as revealed in the word, would be a powerful awe-band upon our souls, a bridle of restraint to keep us from sin, and a powerful spur of constraint to put us upon all manner of gospel obedience.

2. *That he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. Here observe, 1. By the fall we have lost God; we have lost the divine light, life, love, likeness, and communion. 2. God is again to be found of us through Christ the second Adam. 3. God has prescribed means and ways wherein he may be found; to wit, a strict attention to his oracles, attendance on his ordinances, and ministers duly discharging their office and associating with his people, observing his providential conduct, and in all things humbly waiting for his gracious presence. 4. They that would find God in these ways of his, must seek him diligently; they must seek early, earnestly, and perseveringly; then shall they seek him, and find him, if they seek him with all their heart; and when once they have found him, as they reconciled God, they will never repent the pains they have spent in seeking after him.

3. *The faith of Noah, ver. 7.* Observe, 1. The ground of Noah's faith, and that was a warning he had received from God of things as not seen; he had a divine revelation, whether by voice or vision does not appear; but it was such as carried in its own evidence; he was forewarned of things not seen as yet, that is, of a great and severe judgment, such as the world had never yet seen, and of which, in the course of second causes, there was not yet the least sign: This ferret warning he was to communicate to the world, who

would be sure both to despise him and his message. God usually warns sinners before he strikes, and where his warnings are slighted, the blow will fall the heavier. 2. The actings of Noah's faith, and the influence it had both upon his mind and practice. (1.) Upon his mind; it impressed his soul with a fear of God's judgments; he was proved with fear: Faith first influences our affections, then our actions; and faith works upon those affections that are suitable to the matter revealed: If it be some good thing, faith stirs up love and desire; If some evil thing, faith stirs up fear. (2.) His faith influenced his practice; his fear thus excited by believing God's threatening, moved him to prepare an ark, in which no doubt he met with the scorn and reproaches of a wicked generation; he did not dispute with God why he should make an ark, nor how it could be capable of containing what was to be lodged in it, nor how such a vessel could possibly weather out so great a storm: His father silenced all objections, and set him to work in earnest. 3. The blessed fruits and rewards of Noah's faith: 1. Hereby himself and his house were saved, when a whole world of sinners were perishing about them: God saved his family for his sake; it was well for them that they were Noah's sons and daughters; it was well for those women that they married into Noah's family; perhaps they might have married to great estates in other families, but then they had been drowned. We use to say, it is good to be akin to an estate; but surely it is good to be akin to the covenant. 2. Hereby he judged and condemned the world; his holy fear condemned their security and vain confidence; his faith condemned their unbelief; his obedience their contempt and rebellion: Good examples will either convert sinners or condemn them: There is something very convincing in a life of strict holiness and regard to God; it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and they are judged by it. This is the best way the people of God can take to condemn the wicked; not by harsh and censorious language, but by an holy exemplary conversation. 3. Hereby he became an heir of righteousness which is by faith. 1. He was possessed of a true justifying righteousness; he was heir to it. And, 2. This his right of inheritance was through faith in Christ, as a member of Christ, a child of God, and if a child, then an heir. His righteousness was relative, resulting from his adoption, through faith in the promised seed. As ever we expect to be justified and saved in the great and terrible day of the Lord, let us now prepare an ark, secure an interest in Christ, and in the ark of the covenant, and do it speedily before the door be shut, for there is not salvation in any other.

4. The faith of Abraham, the friend of God, and father of the faithful, in whom the Hebrews boasted, and from whom they derived their pedigree and privileges; and therefore the apostle, that he might both please and profit them, enlarges more upon the heroic achievements of Abraham's faith, than any other of the patriarchs, and in the midst of his account of the faith of Abraham, he inserts the story of Sarah's faith, whose daughters these women are that continue to do well. Observe,

1. The ground of Abraham's faith; and that was the call and promise of God, ver. 8. 1. This call, though it was a very trying call, yet it was the call of God; and therefore a sufficient ground for faith and rule of obedience. The manner in which he was called Stephen relates in Acts vii. 2. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia. And said unto him, get thee out of the country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. This was an effectual call, by which he was converted from the idolatry of his father's house, Gen. xii. 1. This call was renewed after his father's death in Charran. Observe, 1. The grace of God is absolutely free in taking some of the worst, and making them the best of men. 2. That God must come to us before we come to him. 3. That in calling and converting sinners, God appears as a God of glory, and works a glorious work in the soul. 4. That that calls us not only to leave sin, but sinful company, and whatever is inconsistent with our devotedness to him. 5. That we need not only to be called to set out well but to go on well. 6. That he will not have his people take up that rest any where short of the heavenly Canaan.

2. The promise of God; God promised Abraham that the place he was called to he should afterwards receive for an inheritance; after a while he should have the heavenly Canaan for his inheritance, and in process of time his posterity should inherit the earthly Canaan. Observe here 1. God calls his people to an inheritance: by his effectual call he makes them children, and so heirs. 2. That this inheritance is not immediately possessed by them, but they must wait some time for it. But the promise is sure, and shall have its seasonable accomplishment. 3. The faith of parents often procures blessings for their posterity.

2. The exercise of Abraham's faith; he yielded an implicit regard to the call of God. 1. He went out, not knowing whither he went. He put himself into the hand of God, to send him whither he pleased; he subscribed to God's wisdom, as strict to direct; and submitted to his will, as strict to determine every thing that concerned him. Implicit faith and obedience are due to God, and to him only; all that are effectually called resign up their own will and wisdom to the will and wisdom of God, and it is their wisdom to do so; though they know not always their way, yet they know their guide, and that satisfies them. 2. He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. This was an exercise of his faith. Observe, 1. How Canaan is called the land of promise, because yet only promised, not possessed. 2. How Abraham lived in Canaan, not as an heir and proprietor, but as a sojourner only; he did not serve an ejecment, or raise a war against the old inhabitants to dispossess them, but contented himself to live as a stranger; to bear their unkindnesses patiently, and to receive any favours from them thankfully, and to keep his heart fixed upon his home, the heavenly Canaan. 3. He dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise: He lived there in an ambulatory moving condition, living in a daily readiness for his remove: and thus should we all live in this world. He had good company with him, and they were a great comfort to him in his sojourning state. Abraham lived till Isaac was seventy-five years old, and Jacob fifteen. Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise; for the promise was renewed to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 3. and to Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 13. All the saints are heirs of the same promise: The promise is made to believers and their children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. And it is pleasant to see parents and children sojourning together in this world, as heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

3. The supports of Abraham's faith, ver. 10. He looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Observe here, 1. The description given of heaven: It is a city, a regular society, well established, well defended, and well supplied: It is a city that hath foundations, even the immutable purposes and almighty power of God; the infinite merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; the promises of an everlasting covenant; its own purity, and the perfection of its inhabitants: And it is a city, whose builder and maker is God. He contrived the model; he accordingly made it, and he has laid open a new and living way into it, and prepared it for his people; and he puts them into possession of it, and prefers them in it, and is himself the substance and felicity of it. 2. Observe the due regard that Abraham had to this heavenly city: He looked for it; he

believed there was such a state; he waited for it, and in the mean time he conversed in it by faith; he had raised and rejoicing hopes, that in God's time and way he should be brought safely to it. 5. The influence this had upon his present conversation; it was a support to him under all the trials of his sojourning state; helped him patiently to bear all the inconveniences of it, and actively to discharge all the duties of it, persevering therein unto the end.

In the midst of the story of Abraham we have inserted an account of the faith of Sarah. Here observe,

1. The difficulties of Sarah's faith, which were very great. As, 1. The prevalence of unbelief for a time; she laughed at the promise, as impossible to be made good. 2. She had gone out of the way of her duty through unbelief, in putting Abraham upon taking Hagar to his bed, that he might have a posterity. Now this sin of hers would make it more difficult for her to act by faith afterwards. 3. The great improbability of the thing promised, that she should be the mother of a child, when she was of a sterile constitution naturally, and now past the prolific age.

2. The actings of her faith. Her unbelief is pardoned and forgotten, but her faith prevailed and is recorded. She judged him faithful who had promised, ver. 11. She received the promise as the promise of God; and being convinced of that, she truly judged he both could and would perform it, how impossible soever it might seem to reason; for the faithfulness of God will not suffer him to deceive his people.

3. The fruits and rewards of her faith. 1. She received strength to conceive seed. The strength of nature, as well as grace is from God: he can make the barren soul fruitful, as well as the barren womb. 2. She was delivered of a child, a man-child, a child of the promise, the comfort of his parents advanced years, and the hope of future ages. 3. From them, by this son, sprung a numerous progeny of illustrious persons, as the stars of the sky, ver. 12. A great, powerful, and renowned nation, above all the rest in the world; and a nation of saints, the peculiar church and people of God; and, which was the highest honour and reward of all, of these according to the flesh the Messiah came, who is over all God blessed for evermore.

The apostle proceeds to make mention of the faith of the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, and the rest of this happy family, ver. 13. Where observe,

1. The trial of their faith in the imperfection of their present state: They had not received the promises, that is, they had not received the things promised; they had not yet been put into possession of Canaan, they had not yet seen their numerous issue; they had not seen Christ in the flesh. Observe, 1. Many that are interested in the promises, do not presently receive the things promised. 2. That one imperfection of the present state of the saints on earth is, that their happiness lies more in promise and reversion, than in actual enjoyment and possession: The gospel state is much more perfect than the patriarchal, because more of the promises are now fulfilled: The heavenly state will be most perfect of all; for there all the promises will have their full accomplishment.

2. The actings of their faith during this imperfect state of things; though they had not received the promises, yet, 1. They saw him afar off. Faith has a clear and a strong eye, and can see promised mercies at a great distance. Abraham saw Christ's day, when it was afar off, and rejoiced, John viii. 56. They were persuaded of them that they were true and should be fulfilled: Faith sets to its seal that God is true, and thereby settles and satisfies the soul. 3. They embraced them. Their faith was a faith of consent: Faith has a long arm, and can lay hold of blessings at a great distance; can make them present; can love them and rejoice in them; and thus antedate the enjoyment of them. 4. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. Observe, 1. Their condition, strangers and pilgrims. They are strangers as saints, whose home is heaven: they are pilgrims as they are travelling towards their home, though oftentimes merrily and slowly. 2. Their acknowledgment of this their condition; they were not ashamed to own it; both their lips and their lives confessed their present condition; they expected little from the world; they cared not to engage much in it; they endeavoured to lay aside every weight; to gird up the loins of their minds; to mind their way, to keep company and pace with their fellow-travellers, looking for difficulties, and bearing them, and longing to get home. 5. Hereby they declared plainly that they sought another country, ver. 14. heaven, their own country. For their spiritual birth and breeding is from thence, and there are their best relations, and there is their inheritance. This country they seek; their designs are for it; their desires are after it; their discourse is about it; they diligently endeavour to clear up their title to it; to have their temper suited to it; to have their conversation in it, and to come to the enjoyment of it. 6. They gave full proof of their sincerity in making such a confession. For, 1. They were not mindful of that country from whence they came, ver. 15. They did not hanker after the plenty and pleasures of it, nor regret and repent that they had left it; they had no desire to return to it. Note, Those that are once effectually and savingly called out of a sinful state, have no mind to return into it again: they now know better things. 2. They did not take the opportunity that offered itself for their return; they might have had such an opportunity; they had time enough to return; they had natural strength to return; they knew the way; those with whom they sojourned would have been willing enough to have parted with them; their old friends would have been glad to receive them; they had sufficient to bear the charges of their journey; and flesh and blood, a corrupt counsellor, would be sometimes suggesting to them a return, but they steadfastly adhered to God and duty under all discouragements, and against all temptations to revolt from him. And so should all of us do. We should not want opportunities to revolt from God; but we must shew the truth of our faith and profession by a steady adherence to him to the end of our days. 3. Their sincerity appeared not only in not returning to their former country, but in desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly. Observe, 1. The heavenly country is better than any upon earth; it is better situated, better stored with every thing that is good, better secured from every thing that is evil; the employments, the enjoyments, the society, and every thing in it is better than the best in this world. 2. All true believers desire this better country. True faith draws forth sincere and fervent desires, and the stronger faith is, the more fervent those desires will be.

7. They died in the faith of those promises; not only lived by the faith of them, but died in the full persuasion that all the promises should be fulfilled to them and theirs, ver. 19. That faith held out to the last. By faith, when they were dying, they received the atonement; they acquiesced in the will of God; they quenched all the fiery darts of the devil; they overcame the terrors of death, disarmed it of its sting, and had a cheerful farewell to this world, and to all the comforts and crosses of it. These were the actings of their faith. Now observe,

3. The gracious and great reward of their faith, ver. 16. God is not ashamed to be their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. Note, 1. God is the God of all true believers, faith gives them an interest in God, and in all his fulness. 2. He is called their God: He calls himself so. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he gives

gives them leave to call him so; and he gives them the spirit of adoption to enable them to cry *Abba, Father*. 3. Notwithstanding their meanness, by nature, vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called their God; such is his condescension, such is his love to them; therefore never let them be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those that are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they be not a shame and reproach to their God, and so provoke him to be ashamed of them; but let them act so as to be for him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. 4. As the proof of this, God has prepared for them a city, an happiness suitable to the relation into which he has taken them. For there is nothing in this world commensurate to the love of God in being the God of his people; and if God neither could nor would give his people something better than this world affords, he would be ashamed to be called their God. If he takes them into such a relation to himself, he will provide for them accordingly. If he takes to himself the title of their God, he will fully answer it and act up to it; and he has prepared that for them in heaven that will fully answer this character and relation, so that it shall never be said to the reproach and dishonour of God, that he has adopted a people to be his own children, and then taken no care to make a suitable provision for them. The consideration of this should inflame the affections, enlarge the desires, and excite the diligent endeavours of the people of God after this city that he has prepared for them.

Now after the apostle has given this account of the faith of others, with Abraham, he returns to him again, and gives us an instance of the greatest trial and act of faith that stands upon record, either in the story of the father of the faithful, or of any of his spiritual seed; and that was his offering up of Isaac, ver. 17. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son.* In this great example observe,

1. The trial and exercise of Abraham's faith: He was tried indeed. It is said, Gen. xxii. 1. *God in this tempted Abraham: not to sin, for so God tempteth no man, but only tried his faith and obedience to purpose.* God had before this tempted or tried the faith of Abraham, when he called him away from his country and father's house; when by a famine he was forced out of Canaan into Egypt; when he was obliged to fight with five kings to rescue Lot; when Sarah was taken from him by Abimelech, and in many other instances. But this trial was greater than them all; he was commanded to offer up his son Isaac. Read the account of it, Gen. xxii. 2. and there you will find every word was a trial; *take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Take thy son, not one of thy beasts or slaves, thine only son by Sarah, Isaac thy laughter, the child of thy joy and delight, whom thou lovest as thine own soul; take him away to a distant place, three days journey, the land of Moriah; do not only leave him there, but offer him for a burnt-offering. A greater trial was never put upon any creature. The apostle here mentions some things that very much added to the greatness of this trial.

1. He was put upon it after he had received the promises, that this Isaac should build up his family, and that in him his seed should be called, ver. 18. and that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and all nations blessed in him; so that being called to offer up his Isaac, he seemed to be called to destroy and cut off his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, and to destroy the whole world; and to sacrifice his own soul and his hopes of salvation, and to cut off the church of God at one blow; a most terrible trial.

2. That this Isaac was his only begotten son by his wife Sarah, and the only one he was to have by her, and the only one that was to be the child and heir of the promise. Isaac was to be put off with earthly greatness. Either the promises of a posterity and the Messiah must be fulfilled by means of this son, or not at all; so that besides his most tender affection to this his son, all his expectations were bound up in him, and if he perished, must perish with him. If Abraham had never so many sons, this was the only son that could convey to all nations the promised blessing; a son for whom he had waited so long, received in so extraordinary a manner, upon whom his heart was set, to have this son offered up as a sacrifice, and that by his own hand; it was a trial that would have overset the firmest and the strongest mind that ever informed a human body.

2. The actings of Abraham's faith in so great a trial. He obeyed; he offered up Isaac; he intentionally gave him up by his submissive soul to God, and was ready to have done it actually, according to the command of God; and he went as far in it as to the very critical moment, and would have gone through with it if God had not prevented him. Nothing could be more tender and moving than those words of Isaac, *My father, here is the wood, here is the fire, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* Little thinking that he was to be the lamb; but Abraham knew it, and yet he went on with the great design.

3. The supports of his faith; and they must be very great, suitable to the greatness of the trial. He accounted that God was able to raise him from the dead, ver. 19. His faith was supported by the sense he had of the mighty power of God, who was able to raise the dead; and he reasoned thus with himself, and so he resolved all his doubts. It does not appear that he had any expectation of being countermanded and prevented from offering up his son; the expectation of that would have spoiled the trial, and consequently the triumph of his faith; but he knew that God was able to raise him from the dead; and he did believe that God would do so, since such great things depended upon his son, which must have failed if Isaac had not a farther life. Observe, 1. God is able to raise the dead, to raise dead bodies, and to raise dead souls. 2. The belief of this will carry us through the greatest difficulties and trials that we can meet with. 3. It is our duty to be reasoning down our doubts and fears, by the consideration of the almighty power of God.

4. The reward of his faith in this great trial, ver. 19. he received his son from the dead in a figure, in a parable. 1. He received his son: He had parted with him to God, and God gave him back again. The best way to enjoy our comforts with comfort, is to resign them up to God, he will then return them, if not in kind yet in kindness. 2. He received him from the dead, for he gave him up for dead; he was as a dead child to him, and the return to him was no less than a resurrection. 3. This was a figure or parable of something farther. It was a figure of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, of whom Isaac was a type. It was a figure and earnest of the glorious resurrection of all true believers, whose life is not lost, but hid with Christ in God. We come now to the faith of other Old Testament saints mentioned by name, and by their particular trials and actings of their faith.

20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come. 21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff. 22. By faith Joseph when he died, made mention of the departing of the

children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. 27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. 28. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyeth the first-born, should touch them. 29. By faith they passed through the Red-sea, as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. 30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

In this roll of believers we have an account;

1. Of the faith of Isaac; something of him we had before interwoven with the story of Abraham. Here we have something of a distinct nature, that by faith he blessed his two sons Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come. Where observe, 1. The actings of his faith: He blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. He blessed them; that is, he resigned them up to God in covenant; he recommended God and religion to them; he prayed for them, and prophesied concerning them, what would be their condition and the condition in times to come; the account we have of this in Gen. xxvii. Observe, 1. Both Jacob and Esau were blessed as Isaac's children, at least as to temporal good things. It is a great privilege to be the offspring of good parents, and many times the wicked children of good parents fare the better in this world for their parents sake; for things present are in the covenant; they are not the best things, and no man knoweth love or hatred by having or wanting such things. 2. That Jacob had the pre-eminence and the principal blessing, which shews that it is grace and the new birth that exalts persons above their fellows, and qualifies them for the best blessings, and that it is owing to the sovereign free grace of God, that in the same family one is taken and another left, one loved and the other hated, since all the race of Adam are by nature hateful to God; that if one has his portion in this world, and the other in the better-world, it is God that makes the difference; for even the comforts of this life are more and better than any of the children of men deserve.

2. The difficulties Isaac's faith struggled with. 1. He seemed to have forgotten how God had determined the matter at the birth of these his sons, Gen. xxv. 23. This should have been a rule to him all along, but he was rather swayed by natural affection and general custom that give the double portion of honour, affection, and advantage to the first-born. 2. He acted in this matter with some reluctance when he came to pronounce the blessings, Gen. xxvii. 33. *He trembled very exceedingly, and charged Jacob, that he had subtilly taken away Esau's blessing, ver. 33, 35.* But for all this Isaac's faith recovered itself, and he ratified the blessing; *I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed.* Rebecca and Jacob are not to be justified in the indirect means they used to obtain this blessing, but God will be justified in over-ruling even the sins of men to serve the purposes of his glory. Now the faith of Isaac thus prevailing over his unbelief; it has pleased the God of Isaac to pass by the weakness of his faith, and commend the sincerity of it, and record him among the elders, that *through faith hee obtained a good report.* We now go on,

6. The faith of Jacob, ver. 21. who when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff. There were a great many instances of the faith of Jacob; his life was a life of faith, and his faith met with great exercise. But it has pleased God to single two instances out of many of the faith of this patriarch, besides what has been already mentioned in the account of Abraham. Where observe,

1. The actings of his faith here mentioned, and they are two, 1. *He blessed both the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh*; he adopted them into the number of his own sons, and so into the congregation of Israel, though they were born in Egypt. And it is doubtless a great blessing to be joined to the visible church of God in profession and privilege, but more to be so in spirit and truth. 2. *He made them both heads of different tribes, as if they had been his own immediate sons.* 3. He prayed for them, that they might both be blessed of God. 4. He prophesied that they should be blessed; but as before Isaac did, so now Jacob prefers the younger, Ephraim; and though Joseph had placed them so, as that the right hand of his father should be laid on Manasseh the elder, Jacob wittingly laid it on Ephraim, and so this by divine direction, for he could not see; to shew that the Gentile church the younger, should have a more abundant blessing than the Jewish church the elder. 2. *He worshipped leaning on his staff*: That is, he praised God for what he had done for him, and for the prospect he had of approaching blessedness; and he prayed for those he was leaving behind him, that religion might live in his family when he was gone. He did this *leaning on the top of his staff*; not as the papists dream, that he worshipped some image of God engraven on the top of his staff; but intimating to us his great natural weakness; that he was not able to support himself so far as to sit up in his bed without a staff; and yet that he would make this an excuse for neglecting the worshipping of God; he would do it as well as he could with his body, as well as with his spirit, though he could not do it as well as he would. He shewed thereby his dependence upon God, and testified his condition here as a pilgrim with his staff, and his weariness of the world, and willingness to be at rest.

2. The time and season when Jacob thus acted his faith: When he was dying he lived by faith, and he died by faith and in faith. Observe, Though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout our whole lives, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its greatest work to do at last, to help the believer to finish well, to die to the Lord, so as to honour him, by patience, hope and joy; so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God's word, and the excellency of his ways for the conviction and establishment of all that attend them in their dying moments. The best way in which parents can finish their course is blessing their families and worshipping their God. We are now come to,

7. The faith of Joseph, ver. 22. And here also we consider, 1. What he did by his faith, he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and

and gave commandment concerning his bones: This passage is out of *Gen. 1. 24, 25.* Joseph was eminent for his faith, though he had not enjoyed the helps for it that the rest of his brethren had; he was sold into Egypt, he was tried by temptations, by sin, by persecution, for retaining his integrity; he was tried by preferment and power in the court of Pharaoh, and yet his faith held out and carried him through to the last. 1. He made mention by faith of the departing of the children of Israel; the time should come when they should be delivered out of Egypt; and he doth this both that he might caution them against the thoughts of settling in Egypt, which was now a place of plenty and ease to them; and also that he might keep them from sinking under the calamities and distresses which he foresaw were coming upon them there; and he does it to comfort himself, that though he should not live to see their deliverance, yet he could die in the faith of it. 2. He gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should preserve them unburied in Egypt, till God should deliver them out of that house of bondage, and that then they should carry his bones along with them into Canaan, and deposit them there. Though the believers chief care is for his soul, yet they cannot wholly neglect their bodies, as being members of Christ and parts of themselves, which shall at length be raised up and be the happy companions of their glorified souls to all eternity. Now Joseph gave this order, not that he thought his being buried in Egypt would either prejudice his soul or prevent the resurrection of his body. Some of the rabbies fancied that all the Jews that were buried out of Canaan must be conveyed underground to Canaan before they could rise again: But he gave this order to testify, 1. That though he had lived and died in Egypt, yet he did not live and die an Egyptian, but an Israelite. 2. That he preferred a significant burial in Canaan before a magnificent one in Egypt. 3. That he would go as far with his people as he could, though he could not go as far as he would. 4. That he believed the resurrection of the body, and the communion that his soul should presently have with departed saints, as his body had with their dead bodies. 5. To assure them that God would be with them in Egypt and deliver them out of it in his own time and way. 2. Observe here, when it was that the faith of Joseph acted after this manner, and that was as in the case of Jacob when dying. God often gives his people living comforts in dying moments; and when he does, it is their duty, as they can to communicate them to those about them for the glory of God, for the honour of religion, and for the good of their brethren and friends. We go on now to,

8. The faith of the parents of Moses, which is cited from *Exod. ii. 3, &c.* Where observe,

1. The acting of their faith; they hid this their son three months; Though the mother of Moses is only mentioned in the history, yet by what is here said, it seems his father not only consented to it but consulted about it. It is a happy thing where yoke-fellows draw together in the yoke of faith, as heirs of the grace of God; and when they do this in a religious concern for the good of their children, to preserve them not only from those that would destroy their lives but corrupt their minds. Observe, Moses was persecuted betimes and forced to be concealed; in this he was a type of Christ, who was persecuted almost as soon as he was born, and his parents forced to flee with him into Egypt for his preservation. It is a great mercy to be free from wicked laws and edicts; but when we are not, we must use all lawful means for our security. In this faith of Moses's parents there was a mixture of unbelief, but God was pleased to overlook it.

2. The reasons of their thus acting. No doubt natural affection could not but move them; but there was something farther. They saw he was a proper child, a godly child, *Exod. ii. 2. exceeding fair*, as in *Acts vii. 20. εὖ τὸ πνεῦμα, venustus Deo, fair to God*; there appeared in him something uncommon; the beauty of the Lord sat upon him, as a presage that he was born to great things, and that by conversing with God his face should shine, *Exod. xxxiv. 29.* and what bright and illustrious actions he should do for the deliverance of Israel, and how his name should shine in the sacred records. Sometimes, not always, the countenance is the index of the mind.

3. The prevalency of their faith over their fear: They were not afraid of the king's commandment, *Exod. i. 22.* That was a wicked and a cruel edict, that all the males of the Israelites should be destroyed in their infancy; and so the name of Israel must be destroyed out of the earth. But they did not so fear as presently to give up their child; they considered that if none of the males were preserved, there would be an end and utter ruin of the church of God and the true religion, and that though in their present state of servitude and oppression one would praise the dead rather than the living, yet they believed God would preserve his people, and the time was coming when it would be worth the while for an Israelite to live. Some body must hazard their own lives to preserve their children, and they were resolved to do it; they knew the king's commandment was evil in itself, contrary to the laws of God and nature, and therefore of no authority or obligation. Faith is a great preservative against the sinful slavish fear of men, as it sets God before the soul, and shews the vanity of the creature, and its subordination the will and power of God. The apostle next proceeds to,

9. The faith of Moses himself, *ver. 24. 25, &c.* Where observe,

1. An instance of his faith in conquering the world. 1. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, whose fondling he was, and her fondling too; she had adopted him for her son, and he refused it. Observe, 1. How great a temptation Moses was under; Pharaoh's daughter was said to have been his only child, and was herself childless; and having found Moses, and saved him as she did, they resolved to take him and breed him up as her son, and so he stood fair to be in time king of Egypt, and he might thereby have been serviceable to Israel. He owed his life to this princess; and to refuse such kindness from her, would look not only like ingratitude to her, but a neglect to providence, that seemed to intend his advancement and his brethren's advantage. 2. How glorious was the triumph of his faith in so great a trial! He refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter, lest he should undervalue the true honour of being a son of Abraham, the father of the faithful; he refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter, lest it should look like renouncing his religion as well as his relation to Israel; and no doubt both these he must have done if he had accepted this honour; he therefore nobly refuses it.

2. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, *ver. 25.* He was willing to take his lot with the people of God here, though it was a suffering lot, that he might have his portion with them hereafter, rather than to enjoy all the sensual sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court, which would be but for a season, and then punished with everlasting misery. Herein he acted rationally as well as religiously, and conquered the temptation to worldly pleasure as he had done before to worldly preferment. Here Observe, 1. The pleasures of sin are and will be but short; they must either end in speedy repentance or ruin. 2. That the pleasures of this world, and especially those of a court, are too often the pleasures of sin; and they are always so when we cannot enjoy them without deserting God and his people; and a true believer will despise them when they are offered upon such terms. 3. Suffering is to be chosen rather than sin; there being more evil in the least sin than there can be in the greatest suffering. 4. It greatly alleviates the evil of suffering, when we suffer with the people of God, embarked in the same interest and animated by the same spirit.

3. He esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the pleasures of Egypt, *ver. 26.* See how Moses weighed matters; in one scale he put the worth of religion, the reproaches of Christ; in the other scale the best of the world, the treasures of Egypt; and in his judgment directed by faith, the worth of religion weighed down the best of the world; the reproaches of the church of God are the reproaches of Christ, who is and ever has been the head of the church. Now here Moses conquered the riches of the world, as before he had conquered its honours and pleasures. God's people are and always have been a reproached people. Christ accounts himself reproached in their reproaches, and while he thus interells himself in their reproaches, they become riches, and greater riches than the treasures of the richest empire in the world; for Christ will reward them with a crown of glory that fades not away. Faith discerns this, and determines and acts accordingly.

2. The circumstance of time is taken notice of, when Moses by his faith gained this victory over the world in all his honours, pleasures and treasures. *When he was come to years, ver. 24.* Not only to years of discretion but of experience, to the age of forty years; when he was great or come to maturity. Some would take this as an extenuation of his victory, that he gained it so late, that he did not make this choice sooner; but it is rather an enhancement of the honour of his self-denial and victory over the world, that he made this choice when he was grown ripe for judgment and enjoyment, able to know what he did and why he did it. It was not the act of a child, that prefers counters to gold, but it proceeded from mature deliberation. It is an excellent thing for persons to be seriously religious, when in the midst of worldly business and enjoyments, to despise the world, when they are most capable of relishing and enjoying it.

3. What it was that supported and strengthened the faith of Moses to that degree as to enable him to gain such a victory of the world, he had respect to the recompense of reward, i. e. say some, the deliverance out of Egypt; but doubtless it means much more, the glorious reward of faith and fidelity in the other world. Observe here, 1. Heaven is a great reward, not only surpassing all our deservings, but all our conceptions: It is a reward suitable to the price paid for it; the blood of Christ, suitable to the perfections of God, and fully answering all his promises. It is a recompense of reward; because given by a righteous judge for the righteousness of Christ to righteous persons, according to the righteous rule of the covenant of grace. 2. Believers may and ought to have respect to this recompense of reward; they should acquaint themselves with it, approve of it, and live in the daily and delightful expectation of it. And thus it will prove a land-mark to direct their course; a load-stone to draw their hearts; a sword to conquer their enemies, and a spur to quicken them to duty; a cordial to refresh them under all the difficulties of doing and suffering work.

2. We have another instance of the faith of Moses, and that was in forsaking Egypt, *ver. 27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.* Twice Moses forsook Egypt: 1. As a criminal, when the king's wrath was incensed against him for killing the Egyptian; where it is said he did fear, *Exod. ii. 14, 15.* Not with a fear of despondency, but of discretion to save his life. 2. As a commander and ruler in Jethurun, after God had employed him to humble Pharaoh, and make him willing to let Israel go. Observe here,

1. The product of his faith. He forsook Egypt, and all its power and pleasures, and undertook the conduct of Israel out of it.

2. The prevalency of his faith. It raised him above the fear of the king's wrath, though he knew it was great, and levelled at him in particular; that it marched at the head of a numerous host to pursue him; he was not dismayed, and he said to Israel, fear not, *Exod. xvi. 13.* Those that forsake Egypt must expect the wrath of men; but they need not fear it, for they are under the conduct of that God that is able to make the wrath of man to praise him and restrain the remainder of it.

3. The principle upon which his faith acted in these his motions. He endured as seeing him that was invisible; he bore up with invincible courage under all danger, and endured all the fatigue of his employment, which was very great; and this by seeing the invisible God. Observe, 1. The God with whom we have to do, is an invisible God; he is so to our senses; to the eye of the body; and this shews the folly of those that pretend to make images of God; whom no man hath seen, or can see. 2. By faith we may see this invisible God; we may be fully assured of his existence, and of his providence, and of his gracious and powerful presence with us. 3. Such a light of God will enable believers to endure to the end, whatever they may meet with in the way.

3. We have another instance of the faith of Moses in keeping the passover, and sprinkling of blood, *ver. 28.* The account of this we have in *Exod. xii. 13—23.* Though all Israel kept this passover, yet it was by Moses that God delivered the institution of it; and though it was a great mystery, Moses by faith both delivered to the people, and kept it that night in the house where he lodged. The passover was one of the most solemn institutions of the Old Testament, and a very significant type of Christ. The occasion of its first observation was extraordinary: It was in the same night that God slew the first-born of the Egyptians; that though the Israelites lived among them, the destroying angel passed over their houses, and spared them and theirs.

Now to entitle them to this distinguishing favour, and to mark them out for it, a lamb must be slain, the blood of it must be sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop upon the lintel of the door, and on the two side-posts; and the flesh of the lamb must be roasted with fire, and must be all of it eaten that very night with bitter herbs, in a travelling posture, their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. This was accordingly done and the destroying angel passed over them, and slew the first-born of the Egyptians. And this opened a way for the return of Abraham's posterity into the land of promise.

The accommodation of this type is not difficult. 1. Christ is that lamb, he is our passover, he was sacrificed for us. 2. His blood must be sprinkled; it must be applied to those who have the saving benefit of it. 3. It is only applied effectually to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. 4. It is not owing to our inherent righteousness or best performances, that we are saved from the wrath of God, but unto the blood of Christ and his imputed righteousness. If any of the families of Israel had neglected the sprinkling of this blood upon their doors, though they should have spent all the night in prayer, the destroying angel would have broken in upon them, and slain their first-born. 5. Wherever this blood is applied, the soul receives a whole Christ by faith, and lives upon him. 6. This true faith makes sin bitter to the soul, even while it receives the pardon and atonement. 7. That all our spiritual privileges on earth should quicken us to set out early, and get forward in our way to heaven. 8. Those that have been marked out, must ever remember and acknowledge free and distinguishing grace.

10. The next instance of faith is that of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea under the conduct of Moses their leader, *ver. 20.* The story we have in *Exod. xiv.* Where observe,

1. The preservation and safe passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, when there was no other way to escape from Pharaoh and his host that were closely pursuing them; Where we may observe, 1. That Israel's danger was very great; an enraged enemy with chariots and horsemen behind them; sleep

steep rocks and mountains on each hand, and the Red Sea before them. 2. That their deliverance was very glorious. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; the grace of faith will help us through all the dangers we meet with in our way to heaven.

3. The destruction of the Egyptians. They presumptuously attempting to follow Israel through the Red Sea, being thus blinded and hardened to their ruin, were all drowned. Their rashness was great, and their ruin was grievous. When God judges he will overcome; and it is plain that the destruction of sinners is of themselves.

11. The next instance of faith is that of the Israelites under Joshua their leader before the walls of Jericho. The story we have *Josh. vi. 5.* where observe, 1. The means prescribed of God to bring down the walls of Jericho, and that was, that they should compass the walls about once a-day for seven days together, and seven times the last day, and that the priests should carry the ark, when they compassed the walls about, and should blow with their trumpets and of rams horns, and sound a longer blast than before, and then all the people should shout, and the walls of Jericho should fall before them. Here was a great trial of their faith; the method prescribed seems very improbable to answer such an end, and would doubtless expose them to the daily contempt of their enemies; the ark of God would seem to be in danger. But this was the way God commanded them to take, and he loves to do great things by small and contemptible means, that his own arm may be made bare. 2. The powerful success of the prescribed means, the walls of Jericho fell before them. This was a frontier town of the land of Canaan, the first that stood out against the Israelites. God was pleased in this extraordinary manner to slight and dismount it; to magnify himself, to terrify the Canaanites, to strengthen the faith of the Israelites, and to exclude all boasting. - God can and will, in his own time and way, cause all the powerful opposition that is made to his interest and glory to fall down, and the grace of faith is mighty through God for the pulling down of strong-holds; he will make Babylon fall before the faith of his people, and when he has some great thing to do for them, he raises up great and strong faith in them.

12. The next instance is the faith of Rahab, ver. 31. Among the noble army of believing worthies, bravely marshalled by the apostle, Rahab comes in the rear, to shew that God is no respecter of persons. Here consider, 1. Who this Rahab was: (1.) She was a Canaanite, a stranger to the common-wealth of Israel, and had but little help for faith, and yet she was a believer; the power of divine grace greatly appears, when it works without the usual means of grace. (2.) She was a harlot, and lived in a way of sin; she was not only a keeper of a public-house, but a common woman of the town, and yet she believed the greatness of sin, if truly repented of, shall be no bar to the pardoning mercy of God: Christ has saved the chief of sinners; where sin has abounded, grace has superabounded. 2. What she did by her faith; she received the spies in peace, the men that Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho, *Joshua ii. 6, 7.* She not only bade them welcome, but she concealed them from their enemies that sought to cut them off, and she made a noble confession of her faith, ver. 9, 10, 11. She engaged them to covenant with her to shew favour to her and hers, when God should shew kindness to them, and that they would give her a sign, which they did, a line of scarlet, which she was to hang forth out of the window; she sent them away with prudence and friendly advice. Learn here, 1. That true faith will shew itself in good works, especially towards the people of God. 2. Faith will venture all hazards in the cause of God and his people; a true believer will sooner expose his own person, than God's interest and people. 3. A true believer is desirous, not only to be in covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God, and is willing to cast his lot with them, and to fare as they fare. 3. Observe what Rahab gained by her faith: she escaped perishing with those that believed not. Observe, 1. The generality of her neighbours, friends, and fellow-citizens, perished; it was an utter destruction that befel that city; man and beast were cut off. 2. The cause of the people of Jericho's destruction, and that was unbelief; they believed not that Israel's God was the true God, and that Israel was the peculiar people of God, though they had evidence sufficient of it. 3. The signal preservation of Rahab. Joshua gave a strict charge that she should be spared, and none but she and hers; and she taking care that the sign, the scarlet thread, should be hung out, her family were marked out for mercy and perished not. Singular faith, when the generality are not only unbelievers, but against believers, will be rewarded with singular favours in times of common calamity.

32. And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also and Samuel, and of the prophets; 33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. 37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38. (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39. And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The apostle having given us a classis of many eminent believers whose names are mentioned, and particular trials and actions of their faith recorded; he now concludes his narrative with a more summary account of another set of believers, where the particulars are not ascribed to particular persons by name, but left to be applied by those that are well acquainted with the sacred story; and, like a divine orator, he prefaces this part of the narrative with an elegant exhortation: *What shall I say more? time would fail me, q. d. it is in vain to attempt to exhaust this subject; should I not restrain my pen, it would soon run beyond the bounds of an epistle; and therefore I shall but just mention a few more, and leave you to enlarge upon them.* Observe, 1. After all our researches into the scripture, there is still more to be learned from them. 2. That we must well consider in divine matters what we

should say, and suit it as well as we can to the time. 3. We should be pleased to think how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects thereof were not then so fully revealed. And, 4. We should lament it, that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak.

In this summary account the apostle, 1. Mentions Gideon, whose story we have in *Judges vi. 11. &c.* He was an eminent instrument raised up of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Midianites: he was a person of mean tribe and family, and called from a mean employment, threshing wheat, saluted by an angel of God in this surprising manner, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of war.* Gideon could not at first receive such honours, but humbly expostulates with the angel about their low and distressed state; the angel of the Lord delivered him his commission; and assured him of success, confirming it by fire out of the rock: Gideon is directed to offer sacrifice, and instructed in his duty, goes forth against the Midianites, when his army was reduced from thirty-two thousand to three hundred; yet by these, with their lamps and pitchers, God put the whole army of the Midianites to confusion and ruin; and the same faith that gave Gideon so much courage and honour, enabled him to act with great meekness and modesty towards his brethren afterward. It is the excellency of the grace of faith, that, while it helps men to do great things, it keeps them from having high and great thoughts of themselves.

2. Barak, another instrument raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, *Judges iv.* where we read, 1. That though he was a soldier, yet he received his commission and instructions from Deborah, a prophetess of the Lord; and he insisted upon having this divine oracle with him in this expedition. 2. He obtained a great victory by his faith over all the host of Sisera. 3. That his faith taught him to return all the praise and glory to God: this is the exultant nature of faith, it has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances.

3. Samson, another instrument that God raised up to deliver Israel from the Philistines: his story we have in *Judges*, chap. xiii. xiv. xv. and xvi. and from it we learn, that the grace of faith is the strength of the soul for great service: If Samson had not had a strong faith, as well as a strong arm, he had never performed such exploits. 1. That by faith the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion. 2. That true faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings. 3. That the believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies; his greatest conquest he gains by dying.

4. Jephthah, whose story we have, *Judges xi.* before Samson he was raised up to deliver Israel from the Ammonites: As various and new enemies rise up against the people of God, various and new deliverers are raised up for them. In the story of Jephthah, observe, 1. That the grace of God often finds out, and fasten upon, the most undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them and by them: Jephthah was the son of an harlot. 2. That the grace of faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways, chap. xi. 11. *Jephthah rehearsed all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.* 3. The grace of faith will make men bold and venturesome in a good cause. 4. That faith will not only put men upon making their vows to God, but paying their vows after the mercy received; yea though they have vowed to their own grief, hurt, and loss, as in the case of Jephthah and his daughter.

5. David, that great man after God's own heart: few ever met with greater trials, and few ever discovered a more lively faith; his first appearance on the stage of the world was a great evidence of his faith; having, when young, slain the lion and the bear, his faith in God encouraged him to encounter the great Goliath, and helped him to triumph over him: The same faith enabled him to bear patiently the ungrateful malice of Saul and his favourites, and to wait till God should put him into possession of the promised power and dignity. The same faith made him a very successful and victorious prince, and, after a long life of virtue and honour (though not without some foul stains of sin) he died in faith, relying upon that everlasting covenant that God had made with him and his, ordered in all things, and sure; and he has left behind him such excellent memoirs of the trials and acts of faith in the book of *Psalms*, as will ever be of great esteem and use to the people of God.

6. Samuel, raised up to be a most eminent prophet of the Lord to Israel, as well a ruler over them: God revealed himself to Samuel, when he was but a child, and continued to do so till his death. In this story observe, 1. That those are like to grow up to some eminency in faith, that begin betimes in the exercise of it. 2. They, whose business it is to reveal the mind and will of God to others, had need to be well established in the belief of it themselves. To Samuel he adds, and of the prophets, who were extraordinary ministers of the Old Testament church, employed of God sometimes to denounce judgment, sometimes to promise mercy; always to reprove sin; sometimes to foretell remarkable events, known only to God; and chiefly to give notice of the Messiah, his coming, person, and offices; for in him the prophets as well as the law centre: Now a true and strong faith was very requisite for the right discharge of such an office as this.

And now, having done naming particular persons, he proceeds to tell us what things were done by their faith; he mentions some things that easily apply themselves to one or other of the persons named; but he mentions other things that are not so easy to be accommodated to any here named, but must be left to the general conjecture or accommodation.

1. By faith they subdued kingdoms, ver. 33. Thus did David, Joshua, and many of the judges. Learn hence, 1. The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms are often set up in opposition to God and his people. 2. That God can easily subdue all those kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him. 3. That faith is a suitable and excellent qualification of those that fight in the wars of the Lord; it makes them just, bold, and wise.

2. They wrought righteousness, both in their public and personal capacities; they turned many from idolatry to the ways of righteousness; they believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness; they walked and acted righteously towards God and man. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righteousness, than to work miracles; faith is an active principle of universal righteousness.

3. They obtained promises both general and special: It is faith that gives us an interest in the promises; it is by faith that we have the comfort of the promises, and it is by faith that we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them.

4. They stopped the mouths of lions: so did Samson, *Judges xiv. 5, 6.* and David, 1 Sam. xvii. 34. and Daniel, chap. vi. 22. Here learn, 1. That the power of God is above the power of the creature: And, 2. That faith engages the power of God for his people, whenever it shall be for his glory to overcome brute beasts and brutish men.

5. They quenched the violence of fire, ver. 33. So Moses, by the prayer of faith, quenched the fire of God's wrath that was kindled against the people of Israel, *Numb. xi. 1, 2.* So did the three children, or rather mighty champions, *Dan. iii. 17.* their faith in God, refusing to worship the golden image,

exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them, and their faith engaged for them that power and presence of God in the furnace, as quenched the violence of the fire, so that not so much as the smell thereof passed on them: Never was the grace of faith more feverely tried, never more nobly exerted, nor ever more gloriously rewarded than theirs was.

6. They escaped the edge of the sword. Thus David escaped the sword of Goliath and of Saul: and Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman. The swords of men are held in the hand of God, and he can blunt the edge of the sword, and turn it away from his people against their enemies when he pleases. Faith takes hold of that hand of God which has hold of the swords of men, and God has often suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the faith of his people.

7. Out of weakness they were made strong; from national weakness into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief; upon the revival of faith all their interest and affairs revived and flourished: From bodily weakness; thus Hezekiah believing the word of God, recovered out of a mortal distemper; and he ascribed his recovery to the promise and power of God, Isa. xxxviii. 15. *What shall I say, he hath spoken it, and he hath also done it; Lord, by these things men live, and in these is the life of my spirit.* And it is the same grace of faith that from spiritual weakness helps men to recover and renew their strength.

8. They grew valiant in fight; so did Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies; and they were not only valiant but successful. God, as a reward and encouragement of their faith, put to flight the armies of the aliens, of those that were aliens to their commonwealth, and enemies to their religion; God made them see and fall before his faithful servants: Believing and praying commanders, at the head of believing and praying armies, have been so owned and honoured of God, that nothing could stand before them.

9. Women received their dead raised to life again, ver. 35. So did the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings xvii. 20. and the Shunamite, 2 Kings iv. 36. 1. In Christ there is neither male nor female: many of the weaker sex have been strong in faith. 2. Though the covenant of grace takes in the children of believers, yet it leaves them subject to natural death. 3. Poor mothers are loth to resign up their interest in their children, though death has taken them away from them. 4. God has sometimes yielded so far to the tender affections of sorrowful women, as to restore their dead children to life again: Thus Christ had compassion on the widow of Nain, Luke vii. 12. 5. This should confirm our faith in the general resurrection.

2. The apostle tells us what these believers endured by faith:

1. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, ver. 35. They were put upon the rack to make them renounce their God, their Saviour, and their religion: and they bore the torture, and would not accept of deliverance upon such vile terms; and that which animated them thus to suffer, was the hope they had of obtaining a better resurrection, and deliverance upon more honourable terms. This is thought to refer to that memorable story, 2 Maccabees vii. &c.

2. They endured trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonment, ver. 36. They were persecuted in their reputation by mockings which are cruel to an ingenuous mind; in their persons by scourging, the punishment of slaves; in their liberty by bonds and imprisonment. Observe, how inveterate is the malice that wicked men have towards the righteous; how far it will go, and what a variety of cruelties it will invent and exercise upon those against whom they have no cause of quarrel, except in the matters of their God.

3. They were put to death in the most cruel manner; some were stoned, as Zechariah, 1 Chron. xxiv. 21. *sawn asunder*, as Isaiah by Manasseh: They were tempted: some read it, burnt, 2 Macc. vii. 5. They were slain with the sword. All sorts of death were prepared for them; their enemies clothed death in all the array of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly met it, and endured it.

4. Those that escaped death were used so ill, as that death might seem more eligible than such a life: Their enemies spared them only to prolong their misery, and wear out all their patience; for they were forced to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented; they wandered about in deserts, and on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, ver. 37, 38. They were stripped of the conveniences of life, turned out of house and harbour; they had not raiment to put on, but were forced to cover themselves with the skins of slain beasts; they were driven out of all human society, and forced to converse with the beasts of the field, to hide themselves in dens and caves, and make their complaint to rocks and rivers, not more obdurate than their enemies. Such sufferings as these they endured then for their faith; and such they endured through the power of the grace of faith; and which shall we most admire? The wickedness of human nature, that is capable of acting such cruelties on fellow-creatures! or the excellency of divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and carry them safely through all!

3. What they obtained by their faith.

1. A most honourable character and commendation from God, the true Judge and Fountain of honour, i. e. that the world was not worthy of such men; the world did not deserve such blessings; they did not know how to value them, nor how to use them. Wicked men! the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares, the world is not worthy of them; and though they differ widely in their judgement, they agree in this, that it is not fit good men should have their rest in this world; and therefore God receives them out of it to that world that is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and their sufferings.

2. They obtained a good report, ver. 39. of all good men, and of the truth itself, and have the honour to be enrolled in this sacred calendar of the Old Testament worthies, God's witnesses; yea, they had a witness for them in the consciences of their enemies, who, while they thus abused them, were condemned by their own consciences, as persecuting those that were more righteous than themselves.

3. They obtained an interest in the promises, though not the full possession of them: they had a title to the promises, though they received not the great things promised. This is not meant of the felicity of the heavenly state, for that they did receive, when they died, in the measure of a part, in one constituent part of their persons, and the much better part; but it is meant of the felicity of the gospel state; they had types, but not the antitype; they had shadows, but had not seen the substance; and yet, under this imperfect dispensation, they discovered this precious faith: And this the apostle insists upon to render their faith more illustrious, and to provoke Christians to an holy jealousy and emulation; that they should not suffer themselves to be outdone in the exercise of faith by those that came so short of them in all the helps and advantages for believing: He tells the Hebrews God had provided some better things for them, ver. 40. and therefore they might be assured he expected at least as good things from them; and that since the gospel is the end and perfection of the Old Testament, which has no excellency but its reference to Christ and the gospel, it was expected that their faith should be as much more perfect than the faith the Old

Testament saints, for their faith and dispensation was more perfect than the former, and was indeed the perfection and completion of the former; for without the gospel-church the Jewish church must have remained in an incomplete and imperfect state. This reasoning is strong, and should be effectually prevalent with us all.

C H A P. XII.

The apostle in this chapter, applies what he has collected in the chapter foregoing, and makes use of it as a great motive to patience and perseverance, in the Christian faith and state, pressing home the argument, 1. From a greater example than he had yet mentioned, and that is Christ himself, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. From the gentle and gracious nature of the afflictions they endured in their Christian course, ver. 4—18. 3. From the communion and conformity between the state of the gospel church on earth, and the triumphant church in heaven, from ver. 18. to the end of the chapter.

1. WHEREFORE, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Here observe, 1. What is the great duty which the apostle urges upon the Hebrews, and which he so much desires they would comply with, and that is, to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them. The duty consists of two parts, the one preparatory, the other perfective.

1. Preparatory: Lay aside every weight and the sin, &c. 1. Every weight, that is, all inordinate affection and concern for the body, and the present life and world: inordinate care for the present life, and fondness for it, is a dead weight upon the soul, that pulls it down when it would ascend upwards, and pulls it back when it should press forward; it makes duty and difficulties harder and heavier than they would be. 2. The sin that doth so easily beset us. The sin that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, or constitution, our company. This may mean either the damning sin of unbelief, or rather the darling sin of the Jews, an overfondness for their own dispensation: Let us lay aside all external and internal hindrances.

2. Perfective; Run with patience the race that was set before them. The apostle speaks in the gymnastic stile, taken from the Olympic and other exercises. 1. Christians have a race to run; a race of service and a race of sufferings; a course of active and passive obedience. 2. This race is set before them, it is marked out unto them, both by the word of God and the examples of the faithful servants of God, that cloud of witnesses with which they are compassed about. It is set out by proper limits and directions; the mark they run to, and the prize they run for, are set before them. 3. This race must be run with patience and perseverance: There will be need of patience to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way, of perseverance to resist all temptations to desist, or turn aside: Faith and patience are the conquering graces; and therefore must be always cultivated, and kept in lively exercise. 4. Christians have a greater example to animate and encourage them in their Christian course than any or all that have been mentioned before, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: Where observe,

1. What our Lord Jesus is to his people; he is the author and finisher of their faith; the beginning and perfecter, and rewarder of it. 1. He is the author of their faith: not only the object, but the author: He is the great leader and precedent of our faith, he trusted in God: he is the purchaser of the Spirit of faith; the publisher of the rule of faith: the efficient cause of the grace of faith; and, in all respects, the author of our faith. 2. He is the finisher of our faith: he is the fulfiller, and the fulfilling of all scripture promises and prophecies; he is the perfecter of the canon of scripture; and he is the finisher of grace, and work of faith with power in the souls of his people; and he is the judge and the rewarder of their faith; he determines who they are that reach the mark, and from him and in him they have the prize.

2. What trials Christ met with in his race and course: 1. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself: ver. 3. he bore the opposition that they made to him, both in their words and behaviour: they were continually contradicting him, and crossing in upon his great designs; and though he could easily have both confuted and confounded them, and sometimes gave them a specimen of his power, yet he endured their evil manners with great patience; their contradictions were levelled against Christ himself, against his person as God-man; against his authority; against his preaching: and yet he endured all. 2. He endured the cross: all those sufferings that he met with in the world; for he took up his cross betimes, and was at length nailed to it, and endured a painful, ignominious, and accursed death; in which he was numbered with the transgressors, the vilest malefactors; yet all this he endured with invincible patience and resolution. 3. He despised the shame, all the reproaches that were cast upon him, both in his life and at his death, he despised them all, was infinitely above them; he knew his innocency, and his own excellency, and despised the ignorance and malice of his despisers.

3. What it was that supported the human soul of Christ under these unparalleled sufferings; and that was the joy that was set before him: He had something in view under all his sufferings, which was pleasant to him; he rejoiced to see, that by his sufferings he should make satisfaction to the injured justice of God, and give security to his honour and government; that he should make peace between God and man; that he should seal the covenant of grace, and be the mediator of it; that he should open a way of salvation to the chief of sinners, and that he should effectually save all those that the Father had given him, and himself be the first-born among many brethren: This was the joy that was set before him.

4. The reward of his suffering: he is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Christ, as mediator, is exalted to a station of the highest honour, of the greatest power and influence: he is at the right hand of the Father: nothing passes between heaven and earth but by him; he does all that is done: he ever lives to make intercession for his people.

5. What is our duty with respect to this Jesus; we must, 1. Look unto him;

him; that is, we must set him continually before us as our example, and our great encouragement; we must look to him for direction, for assistance, and for acceptance in all our sufferings. 2. We must consider him, meditate much upon him, and reason with ourselves from his case to our own: We must analogize, as the word is; compare Christ's sufferings and ours, and we shall find, that as his sufferings far exceeded ours in the nature and measure of them; so his patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate.

6. The advantage we shall reap by thus doing; it will be a means to prevent our weariness and fainting, ver. 3. *Left ye be weary and faint in your minds.* Observe, 1. There is a proneness in the best to grow weary and to faint under their trials and afflictions, especially when they prove heavy and of long continuance: This proceeds from the imperfection of grace and remains of corruption. 2. The best way to prevent this, is to look unto Jesus, and to consider him: Faith and meditation will fetch in fresh supplies of strength and courage; for he has assured them, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him: And this hope will be their helmet.

4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he received. 7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. 9. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits, and live? 10. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby. 12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. 13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. 14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15. Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: 16. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17. For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Here the apostle presses the exhortation to patience and perseverance, by an argument taken from the gentle measure and gracious nature of those sufferings the believing Hebrews endured in their Christian course.

1. From the gentle and moderate degree and measure of their sufferings: *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin,* ver. 4. Observe, 1. He owns they had suffered much, they had been striving to an agony against sin. Here, 1. The cause of the conflict was sin, and to be engaged against sin, is to fight in a good cause; for sin is the worst enemy both to God and man: Our spiritual warfare is both honourable and necessary; for we are only defending ourselves against that which would destroy us, if it should get the victory over us; we fight for ourselves, for our lives, and therefore ought to be patient and resolute. 2. Every Christian is listed under Christ's banner to strive against sin, against sinful doctrines, and sinful practices, and sinful habits and customs, both in themselves and others. Observe, 2. He puts them in mind that they might have suffered more; others have suffered more; for they had not yet resisted unto blood; they had not been called to martyrdom as yet, though they knew not how soon they might be. Learn here, 1. Our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, does not use to call his people out to the hardest trials at first, but wisely trains them up by lesser sufferings to be prepared for greater: He will not put new wine into weak vessels; he is the gentle shepherd, that will not overdrive the young ones of the flock. 2. It becomes Christians to take notice of the gentleness of Christ in accommodating their trial to their strength; they should not magnify their afflictions, but should take notice of the mercy that is mixed with them, and should pity those that are called to the fiery trial to resist to blood: not to the shedding the blood of their enemies, but to sealing their testimony with their own blood. 3. Christians should be ashamed to faint under lesser trials, when they see others bear up under greater, and do not know how soon they may meet with greater themselves. *If we run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses? If we be wearied in a land of peace, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan?* Jer. xii. 5.

2. He argues from the peculiar and gracious nature of those sufferings that befall the people of God; though their enemies and persecutors may be the instruments of inflicting such sufferings on them, yet they are divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to serve by all; and of this he has given them due notice, and they should not forget it, ver. 5. Observe, 1. That those afflictions which may be truly persecution as far as men are concerned in them, are fatherly rebukes and chastisements as far as God is concerned in them. Persecution for religion is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sin of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: Men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession.

2. God has directed his people how they ought to behave themselves under all their afflictions; they must avoid the extremes that many run into. 1. They must not despise the chastening of the Lord: they must not make

light of afflictions, and be stupid and insensible under them, for they are the hand and rod of God, and his rebukes for sin. They that make light of affliction, make light of God, and make light of sin. 2. They must not faint when they are rebuked; they must not despond and sink under their trial, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. 3. If they run into either of these extremes, it is a sign they have forgotten their heavenly Father's advice and exhortation, which he has given them in true and tender affection.

3. Afflictions rightly endured, though they may be the fruits of God's displeasure, yet they are proofs of his paternal love to his people, and care for them, ver. 6, 7. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Observe, 1. The best of God's children need chastisement; they have their faults and follies, which need to be corrected. 2. Though God may let others alone in their sins, he will correct sin in his own children; they are of his family, and shall not escape his rebukes when they want them. 3. That in this he acts as becomes a father, and treats them like children; no wise and good father will wink at those faults in his own children, as he would in others; his relation and his affections oblige him to take more notice of the faults of his own children, than of others. 4. To be suffered to go on in sin without a rebuke is a sad sign of alienation from God; such are bastards, not sons. They may call him father, because born in the pale of the church; but they are the spurious offspring of another father not of God, ver. 7, 8.

4. Those that are impatient under the discipline of their heavenly Father carry it worse towards him, than they would do towards earthly parents, ver. 9, 10. Here, 1. The apostle commends a dutiful and submissive behaviour in children towards their earthly parents; we gave them reverence even when they corrected us. It is the duty of children to give the reverence of obedience to the just commands of their parents, and the reverence of submission to their correction when they have been disobedient. Parents have not only authority but a charge from God to give their children correction when it is due, and he has commanded children to take such correction well; and to be stubborn and discontent under due direction is a double fault; for the correction supposes there has been a fault already committed against the parent's commanding power, and superadds a further fault against his chastising power. 2. From hence he recommends an humble and submissive behaviour towards our heavenly Father when under his correction, and this he does by an argument from the less to the greater.

1. Our earthly fathers are but the fathers of our flesh, but God is the father of our spirits: Our fathers on earth were instrumental in the production of our bodies, which are but flesh, a mean, mortal, vile thing, formed out of the dust of the earth; as the bodies of the beasts are; and yet as they are curiously wrought, and made parts of our persons, and a proper tabernacle for the soul to dwell in, and an organ for it to act by, we owe reverence and affection to those that were instrumental in their procreation; but then we must owe much more to him who is the Father of our spirits. Our souls are not of a material substance, not of the most refined sort; they are not extraneous; to affirm it is bad philosophy, and worse divinity: They are the immediate offspring of God, who, after he had formed the body of man out of the earth, breathed into him a vital spirit, and so he became a living soul. 2. Our earthly parents chastened us for their own pleasure. Sometimes they did it to gratify their passion, rather than to reform our manners. This is a weakness the fathers of our flesh are subject to, and this they should carefully watch against; for hereby they dishonour that parental authority that God has put upon them, and very much hinder the efficacy of their chastisements. But the Father of our spirits never grieves willingly nor afflicts the children of men, much less his own children. It is always for our profit, and the advantage he intends us thereby, is no less than our being partakers of his holiness; it is to correct and cure those sinful disorders that make us unlike to God, and to improve and increase those graces, which are the image of God in us, that we may be and act more like our heavenly Father. God loves his children so, that he would have them to be as like himself as can be, and for this end he chastises them when they need it. 3. The fathers of our flesh corrected us for a few days, in our state of childhood, when minors; and though we were in that weak and peevish state, we owed them reverence; and when we came to maturity, we loved and honoured them the more for it. Why, our whole life here is a state of childhood, minority and imperfection, and therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state, and when we come to a state of perfection, we shall be fully reconciled to all the measures of God's discipline over us now. 4. God's correction is no condemnation; his children may at first fear affliction should come upon that dreadful errand, and we cry, *do not condemn me, but shew me therefore thou contendest with me,* Job x. 2. But that is so far from being the design of God to his own people, that he therefore chastens them now, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He does it to prevent the death and destruction of their souls, that they may live to God, and be like God, and for ever with him.

5. The children of God under their afflictions ought not to judge of his dealings with them by present sense, but by reason, and faith, and experience, ver. 11. *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.* Where observe, 1. The judgment of sense in this case: Afflictions are not grateful to the sense but grievous; the flesh will feel them, and be grieved by them, and groan under them. 2. The judgment of faith, which corrects that of sense, and declares that a sanctified affliction produceth the fruits of righteousness; these fruits are peaceable, and lead to the quieting and comforting the soul. Affliction produceth peace, by producing more righteousness; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. And if the pain of the body contribute thus to the peace of the mind, and short present affliction produceth blessed fruits of a long continuance, they have not reason to fret or faint under it; but their great concern is, that the chastening they are under may be endured by them with patience, and improved to a greater degree of holiness.

1. That their afflictions may be endured with patience, which is the main drift of the apostle's discourse on this subject; and he again returns to exhort them, that for the reason before mentioned, they should lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, ver. 12. A burden of affliction is apt to make the Christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him: but this he must strive against, and that for two reasons. 1. That he may the better run his spiritual race and course: Faith and patience, and holy courage and resolution, will make him walk more steadily, keep a straighter path, prevent wavering and wandering. 2. That he may encourage and not discourage others that are in the same way with him. There are many that are in the way to heaven, that yet walk but weakly and lamely in it. Such are apt to discourage one another, and hinder one another; but it is their duty to take courage, and act by faith and so help one another forward in the way to heaven.

2. That their affliction may be improved to a greater degree of holiness. Since this is God's design, it ought to be the design and concern of his children, that with renewed strength and patience they may follow peace with all men, and holiness, ver. 14. If the children of God grow impatient under

exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them, and their faith engaged for them that power and presence of God in the furnace, as quenched the violence of the fire, so that not so much as the smell thereof passed on them: Never was the grace of faith more severely tried, never more nobly exerted, nor ever more gloriously rewarded than theirs was.

6. They escaped the edge of the sword. Thus David escaped the sword of Goliath and of Saul: and Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman. The swords of men are held in the hand of God, and he can blunt the edge of the sword, and turn it away from his people against their enemies when he pleases. Faith takes hold of that hand of God which has hold of the swords of men, and God has often suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the faith of his people.

7. Out of weakness they were made strong; from national weakness into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief: upon the revival of faith all their interest and affairs revived and flourished: From bodily weakness; thus Hezekiah believing the word of God, recovered out of a mortal distemper; and he ascribed his recovery to the promise and power of God, Isa. xxxviii. 15. *What shall I say, he hath spoken it, and he hath also done it; Lord, by these things men live, and in these is the life of my spirit.* And it is the same grace of faith that from spiritual weakness helps men to recover and renew their strength.

8. They grew valiant in fight; so did Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies; and they were not only valiant but successful. God, as a reward and encouragement of their faith, put to flight the armies of the aliens, of those that were aliens to their commonwealth, and enemies to their religion; God made them see and fall before his faithful servants: Believing and praying commanders, at the head of believing and praying armies, have been so owned and honoured of God, that nothing could stand before them.

9. Women received their dead raised to life again, ver. 35. So did the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings xvii. 20. and the Shunamite, 2 Kings iv. 36. 1. In Christ there is neither male nor female: many of the weaker sex have been strong in faith. 2. Though the covenant of grace takes in the children of believers, yet it leaves them subject to natural death. 3. Poor mothers are loth to resign up their interest in their children, though death has taken them away from them. 4. God has sometimes yielded so far to the tender affections of sorrowful women, as to restore their dead children to life again: Thus Christ had compassion on the widow of Nain, Luke vii. 12. 5. This should confirm our faith in the general resurrection.

2. The apostle tells us what these believers endured by faith:

1. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, ver. 35. They were put upon the rack to make them renounce their God, their Saviour, and their religion: and they bore the torture, and would not accept of deliverance upon such vile terms; and that which animated them thus to suffer, was the hope they had of obtaining a better resurrection, and deliverance upon more honourable terms. This is thought to refer to that memorable story, 2 Maccabees vii. &c.

2. They endured trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonment, ver. 36. They were persecuted in their reputation by mockings which are cruel to an ingenuous mind; in their persons by scourging, the punishment of slaves; in their liberty by bonds and imprisonment. Observe, how inveterate is the malice that wicked men have towards the righteous; how far it will go, and what a variety of cruelties it will invent and exercise upon those against whom they have no cause of quarrel, except in the matters of their God.

3. They were put to death in the most cruel manner; some were stoned, as Zechariah, 1 Chron. xxiv. 21. slain asunder, as Isaac by Manasseh: They were tempted: some read it, burnt, 2 Macc. vii. 5. They were slain with the sword. All sorts of death were prepared for them; their enemies clothed death in all the array of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly met it, and endured it.

4. Those that escaped death were used so ill, as that death might seem more eligible than such a life: Their enemies spared them only to prolong their misery, and wear out all their patience; for they were forced to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented; they wandered about in deserts, and on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, ver. 37, 38. They were stripped of the conveniences of life, turned out of house and harbour; they had not raiment to put on, but were forced to cover themselves with the skins of slain beasts; they were driven out of all human society, and forced to converse with the beasts of the field, to hide themselves in dens and caves, and make their complaint to rocks and rivers, not more obdurate than their enemies. Such sufferings as these they endured then for their faith; and such they endured through the power of the grace of faith; and which shall we most admire? The wickedness of human nature, that is capable of acting such cruelties on fellow-creatures! or the excellency of divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and carry them safely through all!

3. What they obtained by their faith.

1. A most honourable character and commendation from God, the true Judge and Fountain of honour, i. e. that the world was not worthy of such men; the world did not deserve such blessings; they did not know how to value them, nor how to use them. Wicked men! the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares, the world is not worthy of them; and though they differ widely in their judgement, they agree in this, that it is not fit good men should have their rest in this world; and therefore God receives them out of it to that world that is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and their sufferings.

2. They obtained a good report, ver. 39. of all good men, and of the truth itself, and have the honour to be enrolled in this sacred calendar of the Old Testament worthies, God's witnesses; yea, they had a witness for them in the confessions of their enemies, who, while they thus abused them, were condemned by their own consciences, as persecuting those that were more righteous than themselves.

3. They obtained an interest in the promises, though not the full possession of them: they had a title to the promises, though they received not the great things promised. This is not meant of the felicity of the heavenly state, for that they did receive, when they died, in the measure of a part, in one constituent part of their persons, and the much better part; but it is meant of the felicity of the gospel state; they had types, but not the antitype; they had shadows, but had not seen the substance; and yet, under this imperfect dispensation, they discovered this precious faith: And this the apostle insists upon to render their faith more illustrious, and to provoke Christians to an holy jealousy and emulation; that they should not suffer themselves to be outdone in the exercise of faith by those that came so short of them in all the helps and advantages for believing: He tells the Hebrews God had provided some better things for them, ver. 40. and therefore they might be assured he expected at least as good things from them; and that since the gospel is the end and perfection of the Old Testament, which has no excellency but its reference to Christ and the gospel, it was expected that their faith should be as much more perfect than the faith the Old

Testament saints, for their faith and dispensation was more perfect than the former, and was indeed the perfection and completion of the former; for without the gospel-church the Jewish church must have remained in an incomplete and imperfect state. This reasoning is strong, and should be effectually prevalent with us all.

C H A P. XII.

The apostle in this chapter, applies what he has collected in the chapter foregoing, and makes use of it as a great motive to patience and perseverance, in the Christian faith and state, pressing home the argument,

1. From a greater example than he had yet mentioned, and that is Christ himself, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. From the gentle and gracious nature of the afflictions they endured in their Christian course, ver. 4—18. 3. From the communion and conformity between the state of the gospel church on earth, and the triumphant church in heaven, from ver. 18. to the end of the chapter.

1. **WHEREFORE**, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Here observe, 1. What is the great duty which the apostle urges upon the Hebrews, and which he so much desires they would comply with, and that is, to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them. The duty consists of two parts, the one preparatory, the other perfective.

1. Preparatory: Lay aside every weight and the sin, &c. 1. Every weight, that is, all inordinate affection and concern for the body, and the present life and world: inordinate care for the present life, and fondness for it, is a dead weight upon the soul, that pulls it down when it would ascend upwards, and pulls it back when it should press forward; it makes duty and difficulties harder and heavier than they would be. 2. The sin that doth so easily beset us. The sin that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, or constitution, our company. This may mean either the damning sin of unbelief, or rather the darling sin of the Jews, an overfondness for their own dispensation: Let us lay aside all external and internal hindrances.

2. Perfective; Run with patience the race that was set before them. The apostle speaks in the gymnastic stile, taken from the Olympic and other exercises. 1. Christians have a race to run; a race of service and a race of sufferings; a course of active and passive obedience. 2. This race is set before them, it is marked out unto them, both by the word of God and the examples of the faithful servants of God, that cloud of witnesses with which they are compassed about. It is set out by proper limits and directions; the mark they run to, and the prize they run for, are set before them. 3. This race must be run with patience and perseverance: There will be need of patience to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way, of perseverance to resist all temptations to desist, or turn aside: Faith and patience are the conquering graces; and therefore must be always cultivated, and kept in lively exercise. 4. Christians have a greater example to imitate and encourage them in their Christian course than any or all that have been mentioned before, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: Where observe,

1. What our Lord Jesus is to his people; he is the author and finisher of their faith; the beginning and perfecter, and rewarder of it. 1. He is the author of their faith: not only the object, but the author: He is the great leader and precedent of our faith, he trusted in God: he is the purchaser of the spirit of faith; the publisher of the rule of faith; the efficient cause of the grace of faith; and, in all respects, the author of our faith. 2. He is the finisher of our faith: he is the fulfiller, and the fulfilling of all scripture promises and prophecies; he is the perfecter of the canon of scripture; and he is the finisher of grace, and work of faith with power in the souls of his people; and he is the judge and the rewarder of their faith; he determines who they are that reach the mark, and from him and in him they have the prize.

2. What trials Christ met with in his race and course: 1. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself: ver. 3. he bore the opposition that they made to him, both in their words and behaviour: they were continually contradicting him, and crossing in upon his great designs; and though he could easily have both confuted and confounded them, and sometimes gave them a specimen of his power, yet he endured their evil manners with great patience; their contradictions were levelled against Christ himself, against his person as God-man; against his authority; against his preaching; and yet he endured all. 2. He endured the cross: all those sufferings that he met with in the world; for he took up his cross betimes, and was at length nailed to it, and endured a painful, ignominious, and accursed death; in which he was numbered with the transgressors, the vilest malefactors; yet all this he endured with invincible patience and resolution. 3. He despised the shame, all the reproaches that were cast upon him, both in his life and at his death, he despised them all, was infinitely above them; he knew his innocency, and his own excellency, and despised the ignorance and malice of his despisers.

3. What it was that supported the human soul of Christ under these unparalleled sufferings; and that was the joy that was set before him: He had something in view under all his sufferings, which was pleasant to him; he rejoiced to see, that by his sufferings he should make satisfaction to the injured justice of God, and give security to his honour and government; that he should make peace between God and man; that he should seal the covenant of grace, and be the mediator of it; that he should open a way of salvation to the chief of sinners, and that he should effectually save all those that the Father had given him, and himself be the first-born among many brethren: This was the joy that was set before him.

4. The reward of his suffering: he is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Christ, as mediator, is exalted to a station of the highest honour, of the greatest power and influence: he is at the right hand of the Father: nothing passes between heaven and earth but by him; he does all that is done: he ever lives to make intercession for his people.

5. What is our duty with respect to this Jesus; we must, 1. Look unto him;

him; that is, we must set him continually before us as our example, and our great encouragement; we must look to him for direction, for assistance, and for acceptance in all our sufferings. 2. We must consider him, meditate much upon him, and reason with ourselves from his case to our own: We must *analogize*, as the word is; compare Christ's sufferings and ours, and we shall find, that as his sufferings far exceeded ours in the nature and measure of them; so his patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate.

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2. He argues from the peculiar and gracious nature of those sufferings that befall the people of God; though their enemies and persecutors may be the instruments of inflicting such sufferings on them, yet they are divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to serve by all; and of this he has given them due notice, and they should not forget it, ver. 5. Observe, 1. That those afflictions which may be truly perfection as far as men are concerned in them, are fatherly rebukes and chastisements as far as God is concerned in them. Persecution for religion is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sin of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: Men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession.

2. God has directed his people how they ought to behave themselves under all their afflictions; they must avoid the extremes that many run into. 1. They must not despise the chastening of the Lord: they must not make

light of afflictions, and be stupid and insensible under them, for they are the hand and rod of God, and his rebukes for sin. They that make light of affliction, make light of God, and make light of sin. 2. They must not faint when they are rebuked; they must not despond and sink under their trial, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. 3. If they run into either of these extremes, it is a sign they have forgotten their heavenly Father's advice and exhortation, which he has given them in true and tender affection.

3. Afflictions rightly endured, though they may be the fruits of God's displeasure, yet they are proofs of his paternal love to his people, and care for them, ver. 6, 7. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*. Observe, 1. The best of God's children need chastisement; they have their faults and follies, which need to be corrected. 2. Though God may let others alone in their sins, he will correct sin in his own children; they are of his family, and shall not escape his rebukes when they want them. 3. That in this he acts as becomes a father, and treats them like children; no wise and good father will wink at those faults in his own children, as he would in others; his relation and his affections oblige him to take more notice of the faults of his own children, than of others. 4. To be suffered to go on in sin without a rebuke is a sad sign of alienation from God, such are bastards, not sons. They may call him father, because born in the pale of the church; but they are the spurious offspring of another father not of God, ver. 7, 8.

4. Those that are impatient under the discipline of their heavenly Father carry it worse towards him, than they would do towards earthly parents, ver. 9, 10. Here, 1. The apostle commends a dutiful and submissive behaviour in children towards their earthly parents; we gave them reference even when they corrected us. It is the duty of children to give the reverence of obedience to the just commands of their parents, and the reverence of submission to their correction when they have been disobedient. Parents have not only authority but a charge from God to give their children correction when it is due, and he has commanded children to take such correction well; and to be stubborn and disobedient under due direction is a double fault; for the corrector supposes there has been a fault already committed against the parent's commanding power, and supposes a further fault against his chastising power. 2. From hence he recommends an humble and submissive behaviour towards our heavenly Father when under his correction, and this he does by an argument from the less to the greater.

1. Our earthly fathers are but the fathers of our flesh, but God is the father of our spirits: Our fathers on earth were instrumental in the production of our bodies, which are but flesh, a mean, mortal, vile thing, formed out of the dust of the earth; as the bodies of the beasts are; and yet as they are curiously wrought, and made parts of our persons, and a proper tabernacle for the soul to dwell in, and an organ for it to act by, we owe reverence and affection to those that were instrumental in their production; but then we must owe much more to him who is the Father of our spirits. Our souls are not of a material substance, not of the most refined sort; they are not extraneous; to affirm it is bad philosophy, and worse divinity: They are the immediate offspring of God, who, after he had formed the body of man out of the earth, breathed into him a vital spirit, and so he became a living soul. 2. Our earthly parents chastened us for their own pleasure. Sometimes they did it to gratify their passion, rather than to reform our manners. This is a weakness the fathers of our flesh are subject to, and thus they should carefully watch against; for hereby they dishonour that parental authority that God has put upon them, and very much hinder the efficacy of their chastisements. But the Father of our spirits never grieves willingly nor afflicts the children of men, much less his own children. It is always for our profit, and the advantage he intends us thereby, is no less than our being partakers of his holiness; it is to correct and cure those sinful disorders that make us unlike to God, and to improve and increase those graces, which are the image of God in us, that we may be and act more like our heavenly Father. God loves his children so, that he would have them to be as like himself as can be, and for this end he chastises them when they need it. 3. The fathers of our flesh corrected us for a few days, in our state of childhood, when minors; and though we were in that weak and peevish state, we owed them reverence; and when we came to maturity, we loved and honoured them the more for it. Why, our whole life here is a state of childhood, minority and imperfection, and therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state, and when we come to a state of perfection, we shall be fully reconciled to all the measures of God's discipline over us now. 4. God's corrections are no condemnation; his children may at first fear affliction should condemn them that dreadful sound, and we cry, *do not condemn me, but shew me therefore thou contendest with me*. Job x. 2. But that is far from being the design of God to his own people, that he therefore chastens them now, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He does it to prevent the death and destruction of their souls, that they may live to God, and be like God, and for ever with him.

5. The children of God under their afflictions ought not to judge of his dealings with them by present sense, but by reason, and faith, and experience, ver. 11. *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness*. Where observe, 1. The judgment of sense in this case: Afflictions are not grateful to the sense but grievous; the flesh will feel them, and be grieved by them, and groan under them. 2. The judgment of faith, which corrects that of sense, and declares that a sanctified affliction produceth the fruits of righteousness; these fruits are peaceable, and tend to the quieting and comforting the soul. Affliction produceth peace, by producing more righteousness; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. And if the pain of the body contribute thus to the peace of the mind, and short present affliction produceth blessed fruits of a long continuance, they have not reason to fret or faint under it; but their great concern is, that the chastening they are under may be endured by them with patience, and improved to a greater degree of holiness.

1. That their affliction may be endured with patience, which is the main drift of the apostle's discourse on this subject; and he again returns to exhort them, that for the reason before mentioned, they should lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, ver. 12. A burden of affliction is apt to make the Christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him; but this he must strive against, and that for two reasons. 1. That he may the better run his spiritual race and course: Faith and patience, and holy courage and resolution, will make him walk more steadily, keep a straighter path, prevent wavering and wandering. 2. That he may encourage and not discourage others that are in the same way with him. There are many that are in the way to heaven, that yet walk but weakly and lamely in it. Such are apt to discourage one another, and hinder one another; but it is their duty to take courage, and act by faith and so help one another forward in the way to heaven.

2. That their affliction may be improved to a greater degree of holiness. Since this is God's design, it ought to be the design and concern of his children, that with renewed strength and patience they may follow peace with all men, and holiness, ver. 14. If the children of God grow impatient under

under affliction, they will neither walk so quietly and peaceably towards men, nor so piously towards God as they should; but faith and patience will enable them to follow peace and holiness too, as a man follows his calling, constantly and diligently, and with pleasure. Observe, 1. It is the duty of Christians, even when in a suffering state, *to follow peace with all men*, yea even with those that may be instrumental in their sufferings. That is a hard lesson and an high attainment, but it is what Christ has called his people to. Sufferings are apt to sour the spirits, and sharpen the passions; but the children of God must *follow peace with all men*. 2. Peace and holiness are connected together; there can be no right peace without holiness: There may be prudence and discreet forbearance, and a shew of friendship and good-will to all; but this true Christian peaceableness is never found separate from holiness. We must not, under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the ways of holiness, but cultivate peace in a way of holiness. 3. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. The vision of God our Saviour in heaven is reserved as the reward of holiness, and the stress of our salvation is laid upon our holiness; though a placid peaceable disposition contributes much to our meetness for heaven.

6. Where afflictions and sufferings for the sake of Christ are not considered by men as the chastisement of their heavenly Father, and improved as such, they will be a dangerous snare and temptation to apostasy, which every Christian should most carefully guard against: Ver. 15, 16. *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, &c.* And here the apostle enters a serious caveat against apostasy, and backs it with an awful example. 1. He enters a serious caveat against apostasy, ver. 15. Where you may observe, 1. The nature of apostasy; it is *falling of the grace of God*; it is to become bankrupts in religion, for want of a good foundation, and suitable care and diligence; it is *falling of the grace of God*; coming short of a principle of true grace in the soul, notwithstanding the means of grace and a profession of religion; and so coming short of the love and favour of God here and hereafter. 2. The consequences of apostasy: Where persons *fall of having the true grace of God*, a *root of bitterness* will spring up; corruption will prevail and break forth; a *root of bitterness*, a bitter root producing bitter fruits to themselves and others; to themselves, corrupt principles which lead to apostasy; and are greatly strengthened and radicuated by apostasy; damnable errors, to the corrupting the doctrine and worship of the Christian church, and corrupt practices: Apostates generally grow worse and worse, and fall into the grosser wickedness, which usually ends either in downright atheism or in despair: And this produces bitter fruits to others, to the churches, to whom these men belonged; by their corrupt principles and practices many are troubled, the peace of the churches broken, and the peace of mens minds disturbed, and many defiled, tainted with those bad principles, and drawn into defiling practices; so that the churches suffer both in their purity and peace. But the apostates themselves will be the greatest sufferers at last.

2. The apostle backs the caution with an awful example, and that is that of Esau; who, though born within the pale of the church, and having the birthright as the eldest son, and so might have had the privilege of being prophet, priest, and king in his family; was so profane as to despise these sacred privileges, and to *sell his birthright for a morsel of meat*. Where observe, 1. Esau's sin; he profanely despised and sold the birthright, and all the advantages attending it: So apostates, that to avoid persecution, and enjoy sensual ease and pleasure, though they bore the character of the children of God, and had a visible right to the blessing and inheritance, give up all the pretensions thereto. 2. Esau's punishment suitable to his sin: His conscience was convinced of his sin and folly, when it was too late; *he would afterwards have inherited the blessing, but he was rejected*, &c. His punishment lay in two things. 1. He was condemned by his own conscience; he now saw that the blessing he had made so light of, was worth the having, worth the seeking, though with much carefulness and many tears. 2. He was rejected of God; *he found no place of repentance* in God, in his father, or of true repentance in his own soul; the blessing was given to another, even to him to whom he sold it for a morsel of pottage. Esau, in his great wickedness, had made the bargain, and God, in his righteous judgment ratifies and confirms it, and would not suffer Isaac to reverse it. Learn, 1. Apostasy from Christ is the fruit of preferring the gratification of the flesh before the blessing of God and the heavenly inheritance. 2. Sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the divine blessing and inheritance, as now they have. The time is coming when they will think no pains too great, no cares, no tears too much to obtain the lost blessing. 3. That when the day of grace is over (as sometimes it may be in this life) they will find *no place for repentance*; They cannot repent aright of their sin; and God will not repent of the sentence he has passed upon them for their sin. And therefore as the design of all, Christians should never give up their title and hope of their Father's blessing and inheritance, and expose themselves to his irrevocable wrath and curse, by deserting their holy religion to avoid suffering; which, though this may be persecution as far as wicked men are concerned in it, is only a rod of correction and chastisement in the hand of their heavenly Father, to bring them near to himself in conformity and communion. This is the force of the apostle's arguing from the nature of the sufferings of the people of God, even when they suffer for righteousness sake; and the reasoning is very strong.

18. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. 19. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: 20. (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart. 21. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.) 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. 23. To the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. 24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: For if they escaped not who refused him, that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: 26. Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying,

yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27. And this word, Yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. 29. For our God is a consuming fire.

Here the apostle goes on to engage the professing Hebrews to perseverance in their Christian course and conflict, and not to relapse again into Judaism. And this he does by shewing them how much the state of the gospel church differed from that of the Jewish church, and how much it resembles the state of the church in heaven, and on both accounts demands and deserves our diligence, patience and perseverance in Christianity.

1. How much the gospel church differs from the Jewish church, and how much it excels. And here we have a very particular description of the state of the church under the Mosaic dispensation, ver. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. 1. It was a gross sensual state. Mount Sinai, on which that church state was constituted, was a *mount that might be touched*, ver. 18. a gross palpable place and so was the dispensation. It was very much external, earthly, and sensitive, and so more heavenly. The state of the gospel church on mount Sion is more spiritual, rational, and easy. 2. It was a dark dispensation. Upon that mount there was blackness and darkness, and that church state was covered with dark shadows and types: the gospel state is much more clear and bright. 3. It was a dreadful and terrible dispensation; the Jews could not bear the terror of it. The thunder and the lightning, the trumpet sounding, the voice of God himself speaking to them, struck them with such dread, that they *intreated the word should not be spoken to them any more*, ver. 19. Yea, Moses himself said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. The best men on earth are not able to converse immediately with God and his holy angels. The gospel state is mild, and kind, and condescending, suitable to our weak frame. 4. It was a limited dispensation: all might not approach to that mount, but only *Moses and Aaron*. Under the Gospel we have all access with boldness to God. 5. It is a very dangerous dispensation. The mount *burned with fire*, and whatever man or beast touched the mount they must be *stoned or thrust through with a dart*, ver. 20. It is true, it will be always dangerous for presumptuous and brutish sinners to draw nigh to God; but it is not immediate and certain death, as here it was. This was the state of the Jewish church, fitted to awe a stubborn and hardhearted people, and to set forth the strict and tremendous justice of God, and to wean the people of God from that dispensation, and make them more readily to embrace the sweet and gentle economy of the gospel church, and adhere to it.

2. He shews how much the gospel church represents the church triumphant in heaven; what communication there is between the one and the other. The gospel church is called mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem which is free in opposition to mount Sinai, which tendeth to bondage, Gal. iv. 24. This was the hill on which God set his King the Messiah. Now in coming to mount Sion, believers come into heavenly places, and into a heavenly society. 1. Into heavenly places; the city of the living God. God has taken up his gracious residence in the gospel church, which on that account is an emblem of heaven. There his people may find them ruling, guiding, sanctifying, and comforting them; there he speaks to them by the gospel ministry; there they speak to him by prayer, and he hears them; there he trains them up for heaven, and gives them the earnest of their inheritance. 2. To the heavenly Jerusalem as born and bred there; as free denizens there. Here believers have clearer views of heaven, plainer evidences for heaven, and a greater meetness and more heavenly temper of soul.

2. To a heavenly society. 1. To an innumerable company of angels, who are of the same family with the saints, under the same head, and in a great measure employed in the same work, ministering to believers for their good, and keeping them in all their ways, and pitching their tents about them. These for number are innumerable, and for order and union are a company, and a glorious one. And those that by faith are joined to the gospel-church, are joined to the angels, and shall at length be like them, and equal with them. 2. To the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven, that is to the universal church however dispersed. By faith we come to them; have communion with them in the same head, by the same Spirit, and in the same blessed hope, and walk in the same way of holiness; grappling with the same spiritual enemies, and hastening to the same rest, victory and glorious triumph; where will be the general assembly of the first-born, the saints of former and earlier times, who saw the promises of the gospel state, but received them not, as well as those that first received them under the gospel, and were regenerated thereby, and so were the first-born, and the first-fruits of the gospel-church; and thereby as the first-born, advanced to greater honours and privileges than the rest of the world: Indeed all the children of God are heirs, and every one hath the privileges of the first-born. The names of these are written in heaven, in the records of the church there; and a name in God's house, written among the living in Jerusalem; have a good repute for their faith and fidelity, and enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, as citizens are enrolled in the livery books. 3. To God the judge of all; that great God who will judge both Jew and Gentile according to the law they are under; believers come to him now by faith, and made supplication to their judge, and receive a sentence of absolution in the gospel, and in the court of their consciences now, by which they know they shall be justified hereafter. 4. To the spirit of the just men made perfect; to the best sort of men, the righteous, who are more excellent than their neighbours; to the best part of just men, their spirits, and to these in their best state made perfect. Believers have union with departed saints in one and the same head and Spirit, and a title to the same inheritance, of which those on earth are heirs, those in heaven possessors. 5. To Jesus the Mediator of the covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is none of the least of the many encouragements there are to perseverance in the gospel state, since it is a state of communion with Christ the mediator of the new covenant, and of communication of his blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. 1. The gospel covenant is a new covenant distinct from the covenant of works; and it is now under a new dispensation, distinct from that of the Old Testament. 2. Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant; he is the middle person that goes between both parties, God and man; to bring them together in this covenant; to keep them together, notwithstanding the sins of the people, and God's displeasure against them for sin; to offer up our prayers to God, and to bring down the favours of God to us; to plead with God for us, and to plead with us for God; and at length to bring God and his people together in heaven, and to be a mediator of fruition between them for ever: they be-

holding

holding and enjoying God in Christ, and God beholding and blessing them in Christ. 3. This covenant is ratified by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our consciences, as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar and the sacrifice. This blood of Christ pacifies God, and purifies the consciences of men. 4. This is speaking blood, and it speaks better things than that of Abel. 1. It speaks to God in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did on him that shed it, but for mercy. 2. To sinners in the name of God it speaks pardon to their sins, peace to their souls; and bespeaks their strictest obedience, and highest love and thankfulness.

Now the apostle having thus enlarged upon the argument to perseverance, taken from the heavenly nature of the gospel church state, he closes the chapter by improving the argument in a manner suitable to the weight of it, ver. 25, &c. *See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh*; that speaketh by his blood, and not only speaketh after another manner than the blood of Abel spoke from the ground, but that God spoke by the angels, and by Moses spoke on Mount Sinai; then he spoke on earth, now he speaks from heaven. Here observe,

1. That when God speaks to men in the most excellent manner, he justly expects from them the most strict attention and regard. Now it is in the gospel that God speaks to men in the most excellent manner. For, 1. He now speaks from a higher and more glorious seat and throne, not from Mount Sinai which was on this earth, but from heaven. 2. He speaks now more immediately by his inspired word, and by his Spirit, which are his witnesses. He speaks not now any new thing to men, but by his Spirit speaks the same word home to the conscience. 3. He speaks now more powerfully and effectually. Then indeed his voice shook the earth, but now by introducing the gospel state, he hath not only shaken the earth, but the heavens; not only shaken the hills and mountains, or the spirits of men, or the civil state of the land of Canaan, to make room for his people: He hath not only shaken the world as he then did, but he hath shaken the church, that is, the Jewish nation, and shaken them in their church state, which was in Old Testament times a heaven upon earth; this their heavenly spiritual state he hath now shaken. It is by the gospel from heaven that God shook to pieces the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jewish nation, and introduced a new state of the church that cannot be removed, shall never be changed for any other on earth, but shall remain till it be made perfect in heaven.

2. When God speaks to men in the most excellent manner, the guilt of those that refuse him is the greater, and their punishment will be more unavoidable and intolerable; there is no escaping, no bearing it, ver. 25. The different manner of God's dealing with men under the gospel, in a way of grace, assures us, that he will deal with the despisers of the gospel, after a different manner than he does with other men, in a way of judgment. The glory of the gospel, which should greatly recommend it to our regard, appears in these three things: 1. It was by sound of the gospel trumpet, that the former dispensation and state of the church of God was shaken and removed; and shall we despise that voice of God that pulled down a church and state of so long standing, and of God's own building? 2. It was by the sound of the gospel trumpet that a new kingdom is erected for God in the world that can never be so shaken as to be removed: This was a change made once for all, no other change after it, *till time shall be no more*: We have now *received a kingdom that cannot be moved*, shall never be removed, never give way to any new dispensation: The canon of Scripture is now perfected, *the Spirit of prophecy is ceased*, the mystery of God finished, he has put his last hand to it: The gospel church may be made more large, more prosperous, more purified from contracted pollution, but it shall never be altered for another dispensation; they that perish under the gospel, perish without remedy: And from hence the apostle justly concludes, (1.) How necessary it is for us to obtain *grace from God to serve him acceptably*: If we be not *accepted of God* under this dispensation, we shall never be *accepted* at all; and we lose all our labour in religion, if we be not *accepted of God*. (2.) We cannot worship God *acceptably*, unless we worship him with *godly reverence and fear*: As faith, so holy fear is necessary to acceptable worship. (3.) It is only the *grace of God* that enables us to worship God in a right manner: Nature cannot come up to it; it can neither produce that precious faith, nor that holy fear, that is necessary to acceptable worship. 3. God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel, as he appeared to be under the law; though he be our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a *consuming fire*; that is, a God of strict justice, and will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all upstarters; and, under the gospel, the justice of God is in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on Mount Sinai when the law was given.

C H A P. XIII.

The apostle having treated largely of Christ, and faith and free grace, and gospel privileges, and warned the Hebrews against apostasy, now, in the close of all, recommends several excellent duties to them, as the proper fruits of faith, ver. 1—18. then bespeaks their prayers for him, and offers up his prayers to God for them, gives them some hope of seeing himself and Timothy, and ends with the general salutation and benediction, ver. 18, to the end.

1. **L**ET brotherly love continue. 2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. 4. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. 5. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6. So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. 7. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. 8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. 9. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it

is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. 10. We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. 11. For the bodies of the beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burnt without the camp. 12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. 15. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. 16. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

The design of Christ in giving himself for us, is that he may purchase to himself a people, zealous of good works. Now the apostle calls the believing-Hebrews to the performance of many excellent duties, in which it becomes Christians to excel.

1. To brotherly love, ver. 1. By which he does not mean a general affection to all men, as our brethren by nature, all made of the same blood, nor that more limited affection that is due to those that are of the same immediate parents, but that special and spiritual affection which ought to be among the children of God. 1. It is here supposed that the Hebrews had this love one for another, though, at this time, that nation was miserably divided and distracted among themselves, both about matters of religion and the civil state, yet there was true brotherly love left among those of them that believed on Christ; and this appeared in a very eminent manner presently after the sending forth of the Holy Ghost, when they had all things common, and sold their possessions to make a general fund of subsistence to their brethren: The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love; *faith works by love*; the true religion is the strongest bond of friendship; it be not so, it has its name for nothing. 2. This brotherly love was in danger of being lost, and that in a time of persecution when it would be most necessary; it was in danger of being lost by these disputes that were among them concerning the respect they ought still to have to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law: Disputes about religion too often produce a decay of Christian affection, but this must be guarded against, and all proper means used to preserve brotherly love: Christians should always love and live as brethren, and the more they grow in devout affection to God their heavenly Father, the more they will grow in love to one another for his sake.

2. To hospitality, ver. 2. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers*. We must add to brotherly kindness, charity. Where observe, 1. The duty required, to entertain strangers; both those that are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and strange to our persons; especially those that know themselves to be strangers here, and are seeking another country; which is the case of the people of God, and was so at this time; the believing Jews were in a desperate and distressed condition; but he seems to speak of strangers as such, though we know not who they are, nor whence they come; yet, seeing they are without any certain dwelling-place, we should allow them room in our hearts and in our houses, as we have opportunity and ability. 2. The motive; *thereby some have entertained angels unawares*; so Abraham did, Gen. xviii. and Lot, Gen. xix. and one of those Abraham entertained was the Son of God; and though we cannot suppose this will ever be our case, yet what we do to strangers in obedience to him, he will reckon and reward as done to himself, Matt. xxv. 35. *I was a stranger, and ye took me in*. God has often bestowed honours and favours upon his hospitable servants, beyond all their thoughts, unawares.

3. To Christian sympathy, ver. 3. *Remember those that are in bonds*, &c. where observe, 1. The duty, to remember those that are in bonds and adversity. God oftentimes orders it so, that while some Christians and churches are in adversity, others enjoy peace and liberty: All are not called at the same time to resist unto blood. 2. Those that are themselves at liberty, must sympathize with those that are in bonds and adversity as if they were bound with them in the same chain: They must feel the sufferings of their brethren.

2. The reason of the duty, *as being yourself in the body*; not only in the body natural, and so liable to the like sufferings; and you should sympathize with them now, that others may sympathize with you when your time of trial comes; but in the same mystical body, under the same head; and if one member suffer, all the rest suffer with it, 1 Cor. xii. 26. It would be unnatural in Christians not to bear each others burdens.

4. To purity and chastity, ver. 4. where you have, 1. A recommendation of God's ordinance of marriage, that it is honourable in all, and ought to be so esteemed by all, and not denied to those to whom God has not denied it; it is honourable, for God instituted it for man in paradise, knowing it was not good for him to be alone; he married and blessed the first couple, the first parents of mankind, to direct all to look unto God in that great concern, and to marry in the Lord: Christ honoured marriage with his presence and first miracle; it is honourable as a means to prevent impurity and a defiled bed; it is honourable and happy, when persons come together pure and chaste, and preserve the marriage bed undefiled, not only from unlawful but inordinate affections. 2. A dreadful, but just censure of impurity and lewdness; *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*. 1. God knows who are guilty of such sins, no darkness can hide from him. 2. He will call such sins by their proper names, not by the names of love and gallantry, but of whoredom and adultery: whoredom in the single state, and adultery in the married state. 3. He will bring them unto judgment, he will judge them, either by their own consciences here, and set their sins in order before them for their deep humiliation; and conscience, when awakened, will be very severe upon such sinners: or he will set them at his tribunal at death, and the last day, and convict them, and condemn them, and cast them out for ever, if they die under the guilt of this sin.

5. To Christian contentment, ver. 5, 6. where observe, 1. The sin that is contrary to this grace and duty, and that is covetousness, an over eager desire of the wealth of this world, envying others that have more than we; this sin we must allow no place in our conversation; for though it be a secret lust lurking in the heart, if it be not subdued, it will enter into our conversation, and discover itself in our manner of speaking and acting; we must take care

not only to keep this sin down, but to root it out of our souls. 2. The duty and grace that is contrary to *contentiousness*, and that is being satisfied and pleased with *such things as we have*, present things, for past things cannot be recalled, and future things are only in the hand of God; what God gives us from day to day, we must *be content with it*, though it fall short of what we have enjoyed heretofore, and though it do not come up to our expectations for the future, we must *be content with our present lot*, we must bring our minds to our present condition, and this is the sure way to contentment; and they that cannot do it, would not *be contented* though God should raise their condition to their minds, for the mind would rise with the condition; Haman was the great court favourite, and yet not contented; Ahab, on the throne, and yet not contented; Adam in paradise, and yet not contented, yea, the angels in heaven, and yet not contented; but Paul, though abased and empty, had *learned in every state, in any state, therewith to be content*. 3. What reason Christians have to be contented with their present lot: 1. *God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, ver. 5, 6. This was said to *Joshua*, chap. i. 5. but belongs to all the faithful servants of God: Old Testament promises may be applied to New Testament saints; this promise contains the sum and substance of all the promises; *I will never, no, never leave thee, nor ever forsake thee*. Here are no less than five negatives heaped together to confirm the promise; the true believer shall have the gracious presence of God with him in life, at death, and for ever. 2. From this comprehensive promise they may assure themselves of help from God, ver. 6. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me*. Men can do nothing against God, and God can make all that men do against his people to turn to their good.

6. To the duty Christians owe to their ministers, and that both to those that are dead, and to those that are yet alive.

1. To those that are dead, ver. 7. *Remember them that have had the rule over you, &c.* Where observe, (1.) The description given of them, they were such as had *the rule over them*, and *had spoken to them the word of God*; their guides and governors, who had *spoken to them the word of God*. Here is the dignity to which they were advanced, to be rulers and leaders of the people, not according to their own will, but the will and word of God; and this character they filled up with suitable duty: They did not rule at a distance, and rule by others, but they ruled by personal presence and instruction, according to the word of God. (2.) The duty owing to them, even when they were dead: 1. *Remember them*, their preaching, their praying, their private counsel, their example. 2. *Follow their faith*, be steadfast in the profession of that faith they preached to you, and labour after that grace of faith by which they lived and died so well: *Consider the end of their conversation*, how quickly, how comfortably, how joyfully they finished their course!

Now this duty of following the same true faith in which they had been instructed, the apostle enlargeth much upon, and presseth them earnestly to it, not only from the remembrance of their faithful deceased guides, but from several other motives:

(1.) From the immutability and eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ: Though their ministers were some dead, others dying, yet the great Head and High-priest of the church, the *Bishop of their souls*, ever lives, and is ever the same; and they should be steadfast and unmoveable, in imitation of Christ, and should remember that Christ ever lives to observe and reward their faithful adherence to his truths, and to observe and punish their sinful departure from him: *Christ is the same in the Old Testament day, in the gospel day, and will be so to his people for ever*.

(2.) From the nature and tendency of those erroneous doctrines that they were in danger of falling in with: 1. They were divers and various, ver. 9. different from what they had received from their former faithful teachers, and inconsistent with themselves. 2. They were strange doctrines: They were strange doctrines, such as the gospel church was unacquainted with, foreign to the gospel. They were of an unsettling distracting nature, like the wind by which the ship is tossed, and in danger of being driven from its anchor, and carried away, and split upon the rocks: They were quite contrary to that grace of God that fixes and establishes the heart, which is an excellent thing: These strange doctrines keep the heart always fluctuating and unsettled. 4. They are mean and low as to their subject, they are about external, little, perishing things, such as *meats and drinks*, &c. 5. They were unprofitable; those that were most taken with them, and employed about them, got no real good by them to their own souls; they did not make them more holy, nor more humble, nor more thankful, nor more heavenly. 6. They would exclude those that embraced them from the privileges of the Christian altar, ver. 10. *We have an altar, &c.* This is an argument of great weight, and therefore the apostle insists the longer upon it. Observe,

1. The Christian church has its altar: It was objected against the primitive Christians that their assemblies were destitute of an altar: but that was not true: *We have an altar*, not a material altar, but a personal one, and that is Christ; he is both our altar, and our sacrifice; he *sanctifies the gift*: The altars under the law were types of Christ; the *brazen altar* of the sacrifice, the *golden altar* of his intercession.

2. This altar furnishes out a feast for true believers, a feast upon the sacrifice, a *feast of fat things*; spiritual strength and growth, and holy delight and pleasure: The Lord's table is not our altar, but it is furnished with provision from the altar; *Christ our passover for us*, 1 Cor. v. 7. and it follows, *therefore let us keep the feast*: The Lord's supper is the feast of the gospel passover.

3. Those that adhere to the tabernacle of the Levitical dispensation, or return to it again, exclude themselves from the privileges of this altar, from the benefits purchased by Christ: If they *serve the tabernacle*, they are resolved to subject themselves to antiquated rites and ceremonies, to renounce their right to the Christian altar, and this part of the argument he proves and then improves: (1.) He proves that this servile adherence to the Jewish state is a bar to the privileges of the gospel altar; and he argues thus under the Jewish law; *no part of the sin-offering was to be eaten, but all must be burnt without the camp while they dwell in tabernacles, and without the gates when they dwell in cities*: Now if they will still be subject to that law they cannot eat at the gospel altar; for that which is eaten there is furnished from Christ, who is the great sin-offering: Not that it is the very sin-offering itself, as the papists affirm; for then it was not to be eaten, but burnt; but the gospel feast is the fruit and procurement of the sacrifice, which they have no right to, that do not acknowledge the sacrifice itself: And that it might appear that Christ was really the antitype of the sin-offering, and as such, might sanctify or cleanse his people with his own blood, he conformed himself to the type in suffering without the gate: A great degree this was of his humiliation, as if he had not been fit either for sacred or civil society! And this shews, how sin, which was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, is a forfeiture of all sacred and civil rights, and the sinner a common plague and nuisance to all society, if God should be strict to mark iniquity: And having thus shewed that adherence to the Levitical law would, even according to its own rules, debar men from the Christian altar; he proceeds, (2.) To prove this argument, ver. 13, 14, 15. in suitable advices: 1. *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp*; go forth

from the ceremonial law, from sin, from the world, from ourselves, our very bodies, when he calls us: 2. Let us be willing to *bear his reproach*, be willing to be accounted the *offscouring of all things, not worthy to live*, not worthy to die a common death: This was *his reproach*, and we must submit to it; and we have the more reason, because, whether we go forth from this world to Christ or no, we must necessarily go forth in a little time by death; for here we have no continuing city; sin, sinners, death, will not suffer us to continue long here; and therefore we should go forth now by faith, and seek in Christ that rest and settlement that this world cannot afford us, ver. 14. 3. Let us make a right use of this altar; not only partake of the privileges of it, but discharge the duties of the altar, as those that Christ has made priests to attend on this altar: Let us bring our sacrifices to this altar, and to this our High-priest, and offer them up by him, ver. 15, 16. Now what are the sacrifices which we must bring and offer on this altar, even Christ? not any expiatory sacrifices, there is no need of them, Christ has offered the great sacrifice of atonement, ours are only the sacrifices of acknowledgement; and they are, 1. The sacrifice of praise to God which we should offer up to God continually: In this is included all adoration and prayer, as well as thanksgiving; this is *the fruit of our lips*; we must speak forth the praises of God from unfeigned lips; and this must be only offered to God, not to angels, or saints, or any creature, but to the name of God alone; and it must be by Christ, in a dependence upon his meritorious satisfaction and intercession. 2. The sacrifice of alms-deeds, and Christian charity, ver. 16. *To do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*. We must, according to our power, communicate to the necessities of the souls and bodies of men; not contenting ourselves to offer the sacrifices of our lips, mere words, but the sacrifice of good deeds: And these we must lay down upon this altar, not depending upon the merit of our good deeds, but of our great High-priest; and with such sacrifices as these, adoration and alms thus offered up, God is well pleased; he will accept the offering with pleasure, and will accept and bless the offerers through Christ.

2. Having thus told us the duty Christians owe to their deceased ministers, which principally consists in following their faith, and not departing from it; the apostle tells us what is the duty that people owe to their living ministers, in ver. 17. and the reasons of that duty: 1. The duty, to obey them, and submit themselves to them. It is not an implicit obedience, nor absolute submission, that is here required, but only so far as is agreeable to the mind and will of God revealed in his word; and yet it is truly obedience and submission, and that not only to God, but to the authority of the ministerial office, which is of God; as certainly in all things belonging to that office, as the authority of parents or the civil magistrate in the things within their sphere: Christians must submit to be instructed by their ministers, and not think themselves too wise, or too good, or too great to learn from them; and when they find that ministerial instructions are agreeable to the written word, they must obey them. 2. The motives to this duty: (1.) They have the rule over the people; their office, though not magisterial, yet is truly authoritative; they have no authority to lord it over the people, but to lead them in the ways of God, by informing and instructing them, explaining the word of God to them, and applying it to their several cases; they are not to make laws of their own, but to interpret the laws of God; nor is their interpretation to be immediately received without examination, but the people must search the scriptures, and so far as the instructions of their ministers are according to that rule, they ought to receive them, not as the word of men, but as they are indeed, the word of God, that works effectually in those that believe. (2.) They watch for the souls of the people, not to ensnare them, but to save them: not to gain them to themselves, but to Christ; to build them up in knowledge, faith, and holiness; they are to watch against every thing that may be hurtful to the souls of men, and to give them warning of dangerous errors, of the devices of Satan, of approaching judgments; they are to watch for all opportunities of helping the souls of men forward in the way to heaven. (3.) They must give an account how they have discharged their duty, and what is become of the souls committed to their trust, whether any have been lost through their neglect, and whether any of them have been brought in and built up under their ministry. (4.) They would be glad to give a good account of themselves and their hearers: If they can then give in an account of their own fidelity and success, it will be a joyful day to them; those souls that have been covered and confirmed under their ministry, will be their joy, and their crown, in the day of the Lord Jesus. (5.) If they give up their account with grief, it will be the peoples loss as well as theirs: It is the interest of hearers, that the account their ministers give of them may be with joy, and not with grief: If faithful ministers be not successful, the grief will be theirs, but the loss will be the peoples: Faithful ministers have delivered their own souls, but a fruitless and faithless peoples blood and ruin will be upon their own heads.

18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. 19. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. 20. Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 22. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words. 23. Know ye, that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. 24. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. 25. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Here, 1. The apostle recommends himself, and his fellow-sufferers to the prayers of the Hebrew believers, ver. 18. *Pray for us*; for me, and Timothy, mentioned ver. 23. and for all those of us that labour in the ministry of the gospel. (1.) This is one part of the duty people owe to their ministers; they need the prayers of the people; and the more earnestly the people pray for their ministers, the more benefit they may expect to reap from their ministry; they should pray that God would teach those that are to teach them, that he would make them vigilant, and wise, and zealous, and successful; that he would assist them in all their labours, support them under all their burdens, and strengthen them under all their temptations. (2.) There are good reasons why people should pray for their ministers; he mentions two. 1. *We trust we have a good conscience*, &c. ver. 18. Many of

the Jews had an ill opinion of Paul, because, he being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, had cast off the Levitical law, and preached up Christ: Now here he modestly asserts his own integrity: *We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.* *We trust*, he might have said, we know, but he chose to speak in an humble stile, to teach us all not to be too confident of ourselves, but to maintain a godly jealousy over our own hearts: *We trust we have a good conscience*, an enlightened and well-informed conscience, a clean and pure conscience, a tender and faithful conscience, a conscience testifying for us, not against us: *a good conscience in all things*, in the duties both of the first and second table, towards God, and towards men; and especially in all things pertaining to our ministry, we would act honestly and sincerely in all things. Observe, (1.) *A good conscience* has a respect to all God's commands, and all our duty. (2.) That those that have this *good conscience*, yet need the prayers of others. (3.) Conscientious ministers are public blessings, and deserve the prayers of the people. 2. Another reason why he desires their prayers is, that he hoped thereby to be the sooner restored to them, ver. 19. intimating, he had been formerly among them; and now, that he was absent from them, that he had a great desire and real intention to come again to them; and that the best way to facilitate his return to them, and to make it a mercy to him and them, was to make it a matter of their prayer. When ministers come to a people as a return of prayer, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves, and success to the people. We should fetch in all our mercies by prayer.

2. He offers up his prayers to God for them, being willing to do for them as he desired they should do for him, ver. 20. *Now the God of peace, &c.* In this excellent prayer, observe, 1. The title given to God, *the God of peace*, who has found out a way for peace and reconciliation between himself and sinners, and who loves peace on earth, and especially in his churches. 2. The great work ascribed to him. He hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, &c. Jesus raised himself by his own power; and yet the Father was concerned in it, attesting thereby that justice was satisfied, and the law fulfilled. He rose again for our justification, and that divine power by which he was raised, is able to do every thing for us, that we stand in need of. 3. The titles given to Christ; our Lord Jesus, our Sovereign, and our Saviour, and the great Shepherd of the Sheep, promised in *Isa. xl. 11.* declared by himself to be so, *John x. 14, 15.* Ministers and under-shepherds, Christ is the great shepherd. This denotes his interest in his people; they are the flock of his pasture, and his care and concern is for them; he feeds them, and leads them, and watches over them. 4. The way and method in which God is reconciled, and Christ raised from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. The blood of Christ satisfied divine justice, and so procured Christ's release from the prison of

the grave, as having paid our debt, according to an eternal covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son; and this blood is the sanction and seal of an everlasting covenant between God and his people. 5. The mercy prayed for, ver. 21. *Make you perfect in every good work, &c.* Observe, 1. The perfection of the saints in every good work, is the great thing desired by them and for them, that they may here have a perfection of integrity, a clear mind, a clean heart, lively affections, regular and resolved will, and suitable strength for every good work to which they are called now; and at length a perfection of degrees to fit them for the employment and felicity of heaven. 2. The way in which God makes his people perfect; it is by working in them always what is pleasing in his sight, and that through Jesus Christ, to whom he glory for ever. Observe, 1. There is no good thing wrought in us, but it is the work of God; he works in us, before we are fit for any good work. 2. No good thing is wrought in us by God, but through Jesus Christ, for his sake, and by his Spirit. And therefore, 3. Eternal glory is due to him, who is the cause of all the good principles wrought in us, and all the good works done by us: And to this every one should say Amen.

3. He gives the Hebrews an account of Timothy's liberty, and his hopes of seeing them with him in a little time, ver. 23. It seems Timothy had been a prisoner, doubtless, for the gospel, but now he was set at liberty. The imprisonment of faithful ministers is an honour to them, and their enlargement matter of joy to the people; he was pleased with the hopes of not only seeing Timothy, but seeing the Hebrews with him. Opportunities of writing to the churches of Christ, are desired by the faithful ministers of Christ, and pleasant to them.

4. Having given a brief account of this his letter, and begged their attention to it, ver. 22. closes with salutations, and a solemn, though short benediction.

1. The salutation. 1. From himself to them, directed to all their ministers that had rule over them, and to all the saints; to them all, ministers and people. 2. From the Christians in Italy to them. It is a good thing to have the law of holy love and kindness wrote in the hearts of Christians one towards another. Religion teaches men the truest civility and good breeding. It is not a sour or morose thing.

2. The solemn, though short benediction, ver. 25. *Grace be with you all. Amen.* Let the favour of God be towards, and his grace continually working in you, and with you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, as the first-fruits of glory. When the people of God have been conversing together by word or writing, it is good to part with prayer, desiring for each other the continuance of the gracious presence of God, that they may meet together again in the world of praise.

THE END OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF J A M E S.

By Bro. S. Wright.

THE writer of this epistle was not James the son of Zebedee: For he was put to death by Herod, *Acts xii.* before Christianity had gained so much ground among the Jews of the dispersion, as is here implied. But it was the other James, the son of Alphaeus; who was cousin-german to Christ, and one of the twelve apostles, *Math. x. 3.* He is called a pillar, *Gal. ii. 9.* And this epistle of his cannot be disputed, without loosening a foundation stone.

It is called a general epistle, because (as some think) not directed to any particular person or church; but such a one as we call a circular letter. Others think it is called general or catholic, to distinguish it from the epistles of Ignatius, Barnabas, Polycarp, and others that were noted in the primitive times, but not generally received in the church, and on that account not canonical as this is. Eusebius tells us, that this *epistle was generally read in the churches with the other catholic epistles.* Hist. Eccles. page 53. Ed. Val. Anno 1678. St James, our author, was called the Just, for his great piety. He was an eminent example of those graces which he presses upon others. He was so exceedingly revered for his justice, temperance, and devotion, that Josephus, the Jewish historian, records it as one of the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, "That St. James was martyred in it." This is mentioned in hopes of procuring the greater regard to what is penned by so holy and excellent a man.

The time when this epistle was written is uncertain. The design of it is, to reprove Christians for their great degeneracy both in faith and manners; and to prevent the spreading of those libertine doctrines which threatened the destruction of all practical godliness. (Particulars shall be laid down in the contents at the beginning of each chapter.) It was also a special intention of the author of this epistle, to awaken the Jewish nation to a sense of the greatness and nearness of those judgments which were coming upon them; and to support all true Christians in the way of their duty, under those calamities and persecutions they might meet with. The truths laid down are very momentous and necessary to be maintained; and the rules for practice, as here stated, are such as ought to be observed in our times as well as in preceding ages.

C H A P. I.

After the inscription and salutation, ver. 1. *Christians are taught how to carry it when under the cross. Several graces and duties are recommended; and those who endure their trials and afflictions as the apostle here directs, are pronounced blessed, and are assured of a glorious reward, ver. 2—12. But those sins which bring sufferings, or those weaknesses and faults men are chargeable with under them, are by no means to be imputed to God; who cannot be the author of sin, but is the author of all good, ver. 13—18. All passion and rash anger, and vile affections ought to be suppressed. The word of God should be made our chief study: And what we hear and know of it, we must take care to practise; otherwise our religion will prove but a vain thing. To which is added an account wherein pure religion consists, ver. 19—27.*

1 JAMES a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. 2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3. Knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. 4. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven

driven with the wind, and tossed. 7. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. 9. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: 10. But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11. For the sun is *no sooner* risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. 12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

We are here to consider, first, the inscription of this epistle, and then the matter of it.

The inscription has three principal parts.

1. The character by which our author desires to be known. *James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Though he was a prime minister in Christ's kingdom, yet he styles himself only a servant. Note hence, That those who are the highest in office or attainments in the church of Christ, yet are but servants. They should not act therefore as masters, but as ministers. Farther, though St. James is called by the evangelist the brother of our Lord, yet it was his glory to serve Christ in the spirit, rather than to boast of his being akin according to the flesh. From hence let us learn to prize this title above all others in the world, *the servants of God and of Christ.* Again, it is to be observed that St. James professes himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to teach us that in all the services we should have an eye to the Son as well as the Father. We cannot acceptably serve the Father unless we are also servants of the Son. God will have *all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. looking for acceptance in Christ, and assistance from him, and yielding all obedience to him; *confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2. The apostle here mentions the condition of those to whom he writes. *The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.* Some understand this of the dispersion upon the persecution of Stephen, Acts viii. But that only reached to Judea and Samaria. Others by the Jews of the dispersion understand those that were in Assyria, Babylon, and other kingdoms into which their wars had driven them. The greatest part indeed of ten of the twelve tribes were lost in captivity; but yet some of every tribe were preserved, and are still honoured with the ancient title of twelve tribes. These however were scattered and dispersed. 1. They were dispersed in mercy. Having the scriptures of the Old Testament, the providence of God so ordered it, that they were scattered in several countries for the diffusing of the light of divine revelation. 2. They began now to be scattered in wrath. The Jewish nation was crumbling into parties and factions, and many were forced to leave their own country, as being now grown too hot for them. Even good people among them shared in the common calamity. 3. These Jews of the dispersion were those that had embraced the *Christian faith.* They were persecuted and forced to seek for shelter in other countries: the Gentiles being kinder to Christians than the Jews were. Note here, That it is often the lot even of God's own tribes to be scattered abroad. The gathering day is reserved for the end of time; when all the dispersed children of God shall be gathered together to Christ their head. In the mean time, while God's tribes are scattered abroad, he will send to look after them. Here is an apostle writing to the scattered; an epistle from God to them, when driven away from his temple, and seemingly neglected by him. Apply here that of the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xi. 16. *Thus saith the Lord God, although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.* God hath a particular care of his outcasts. *Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab, Isa. xvi. 3, 4.*

God's tribes may be scattered; therefore we should not value ourselves too much on outward privileges. And, on the other hand, we should not despond and think ourselves rejected under outward calamities; because God does remember and send comfort to his scattered people.

3. St. James here shews the respect he had even for the dispersed. *Greeting, saluting them, wishing peace and salvation to them.* True Christians should not be the less valued for their hardships. It was the desire of this apostle's heart, that those who were scattered, yet might be comforted. That they might do well and fare well, and be enabled to rejoice even in their distresses. God's people have reason to rejoice in all places, and at all times; as will abundantly appear from what follows.

We next come to consider the matter of this epistle. And in the verses now before us we have these following things to be observed.

I. The *suffering state* of Christians in this world is represented, and that in a very instructive manner; if we attend to what is plainly and necessarily implied, together with what is fully expressed.

1. It is implied, that *troubles and afflictions* may be the lot of the *best Christians*; even of those who have the most reason to think and hope *well of themselves.* Such as have a title to the *greatest joy*, yet may endure *very grievous afflictions.* As good people are liable to be scattered, they must not think it strange if they meet with troubles.

2. These outward afflictions and troubles are *temptations to them.* The devil endeavours by sufferings and crosses to draw men to sin, and to deter them from duty, or unfit them for it: But as our afflictions are in God's hand, they are intended for the trial and improvement of our graces. The gold is put into the furnace that it may be purified.

3. These temptations may be *numerous and various.* *Divers temptations,* as the apostle speaks. Our trials may be of many and different kinds, and therefore we have need to put on the whole armour of God. We must be armed on every side, because temptations lie on all sides.

4. The trials of a good man are such as he does not *create to himself, or sinfully put upon himself*; but they are such as he is said to fall into. And for this reason they are the better borne by him.

II. The graces and duties of a state of trial and afflictions are here pointed out to us. And could we attend to these things, and grow in them as we should do, how good would it be for us to be afflicted.

1. Christian grace to be exercised, is joy. *Count it all joy*, ver. 2. We must not sink into a sad and disconsolate frame of mind, that would make us faint under our trials: but must endeavour to keep our spirits dilated and enlarged, the better to take in a true sense of our case, and with greater advantage to set ourselves to make the best of it. Philosophy may instruct men to be calm under their troubles; but Christianity teaches them to be joyful; because such exercises proceed from love, and not fury in God. In them we are conformable to Christ our head, and they become marks of our adoption; and by suffering in the ways of righteousness, we are serving the

interests of our Lord's kingdom among men, and edifying the body of Christ. And our trials will brighten our graces now, and our crown at last. Therefore there is reason to *count it all joy*, when trials and difficulties become our lot in the way of our duty. And this it not purely a New Testament paradox, but even in Job's time it was said, *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth.* There is the more reason for joy in afflictions, if we consider the other graces that are promoted by them.

2. Faith is a grace that one expression supposes, and another expressly requires: *Knowing this, that the trial of your faith*, ver. 3. And then in ver. 5. let him *ask in faith.* There must be a sound believing of the great truths of Christianity, and a resolute cleaving to them in times of trial. That faith which is spoken of here as tried by afflictions, consists in a belief of the power, and word, and promise of God, and in fidelity and constancy to the Lord Jesus.

3. There must be *patience*: *The trial of faith worketh patience*: Trying of one grace produces another; and the more the suffering graces of a Christian are exercised, the stronger they grow: *Tribulation worketh patience*, Rom. v. 3. Now to exercise Christian *patience* aright, we must, 1. *Let it work.* It is not a stupid, but an active thing: A Stoical apathy and a Christian *patience* are very different: By the one men become, in some measure, insensible of their afflictions; but by the other they become triumphant in and over them. Let us take care, in times of trial, that *patience*, and not passion, be set at work in us: Whatever is said or done, let *patience* have the saying and doing of it: Do not let the indulging of our passions hinder the operation and noble effects of *patience*; give it leave to work, and it will work wonders in a time of trouble. 2. We must *let it have its perfect work*: Do nothing to limit it, or to weaken it; but let it have its full scope: If one affliction come upon the heels of another, and a train of them are drawn upon us, yet *let patience go on till its work is perfected.* When we hear all that God appoints, and as long as he appoints, and with an humble obedient eye to him, and when we not only bear troubles, but rejoice in them, then *patience hath its perfect work.* 3. When the work of *patience* is complete, then the Christian is *entire*, and *nothing will be wanting*: It will furnish us with all that is necessary for our Christian race and warfare, and will enable us to persevere to the end, and then *its work* will be ended, and crowned with glory: After we have abounded in other graces, we have need of *patience*, Heb. x. 36. But *let patience have its perfect work, and we shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

4. Prayer is a duty recommended also to suffering Christians; and here the apostle shews, 1. What we ought more especially to pray for; *wisdom.* *If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God.* We should not pray so much for the removal of an affliction, as for wisdom to make a right use of it. And who is there that does not want wisdom under any great trials or exercises, to guide them, both in his judging of things, and in the conduct of his own spirit and temper, and in the management of his affairs? To be wise in trying times is a special gift of God, and to him we must seek for it.

2. In *what way this is to be obtained*, namely, upon our petitioning or asking for it. Let the foolish become beggars at the throne of grace, and they are in a fair way to be wise. It is not said, let such ask of man, no not of any man, but let him ask of God, who made him, and gave him his understanding and reasonable powers at first. And of him, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let us confess our want of wisdom to God, and daily ask it of him. 3. We have the *greatest encouragement* to do this, *he giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not.* Yea it is expressly promised it *shall be given*, ver. 5. Here is something in answer to every discouraging turn of the mind, when we go to God, under a sense of our own weakness and folly, to ask for wisdom. He to whom we are sent, we are sure has it to give. And he is of a giving disposition, inclined to bestow this upon those that ask. And no fear of his favours being limited to some in this case, so as to exclude others, or any humble petitioning soul, for *he gives to all men.* And if you should say you want a *great deal* of wisdom, a small portion will not serve your turn: why, *he gives liberally.* And lest you should be afraid of going to him unseasonably, or being put to shame for your folly; it is added, *he upbraideth not.* Ask when you will, and as often as you will, you will meet with no upbraidings. And if after all, any should say, this may be the case with some, but I fear I shall not succeed so well in my seeking for wisdom as some others may; let such consider how particular and express the promise is, *it shall be given him.* Justly then must fools perish in their foolishness, if wisdom may be had for asking, and they will not pray to God for it. But, 4. There is *one thing necessary to be observed in our asking*, namely, that we do it with a believing, *steady mind*, ver. 6. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.* The promise above is very sure, taking this proviso along with us; wisdom shall be given to those that ask it of God, provided they believe that God is able to make the simple wise; and is faithful to make good his word to those that apply to him. This was the condition Christ insisted on, in treating with those that came to him for healing: *Believest thou that I am able to do this?* There must be *no wavering*, no staggering at the promise of God through unbelief, or through a sense of any disadvantages that lie on our own part. Here therefore we see,

5. That *oneness, and sincerity of intention, and a steadiness of mind*, is another duty required under affliction. *He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.* To be sometimes lifted up by faith, and then thrown down again by distrust; to mount sometimes towards the heavens, with an intention to secure glory, and honour, and immortality; and then to sink again in seeking the ease of the body, or the enjoyments of *this world*; this is very fitly and elegantly compared to a *wave of the sea*, that rises and falls, swells and sinks, just as the wind tosses it higher or lower, that way or this. A mind that has but one single and prevailing regard to its spiritual and eternal interest, and that keeps steady in its purposes for God, will grow wise by afflictions, will continue fervent in its devotions, and will be superior to all trials and oppositions. Now for the cure of a *wavering spirit* and a *weak faith*, the apostle shews the ill effects of these; 1. In that the *success of prayer* is spoiled hereby, ver. 7. *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* Such a distrustful, shifting, unsettled person is not likely to value a favour from God as he should do, and therefore cannot expect to receive it. In asking for divine and heavenly wisdom we are never like to prevail, if we have not a heart to prize it above rubies, and the greatest things in this world. 2. A *wavering faith* and spirit has an *ill influence* upon our *conversations*, ver. 8. *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.* When our faith and spirits rise and fall with second causes, there will be great unsteadiness in all our conversation and actions. This may sometimes expose men to contempt in the world; but it is certain such ways cannot please God, nor procure any good for us in the end. While we have but one God to trust to, we have but one God to be governed by, and this should keep us even and steady. He that is *unstable as water*, shall not excel. Hereupon,

III. The *holy, humble temper* of a Christian both in advancement and debasement is described: And both poor and rich are directed on what grounds to build their joy and comfort, ver. 9, 10, 11.

Here we may observe, 1. That those of *low degree* are to be looked upon

as brethren. *Let the brother of low degree, &c.* Poverty does not destroy the relations among Christians.

2. Observe also that good Christians may be *rich in the world*, ver. 10. *Grace and wealth* are not wholly inconsistent. Abraham the father of the faithful was rich in silver and gold.

3. Observe that both these are allowed to rejoice. No condition of life puts us out of a capacity of rejoicing in God. If we do not rejoice in him always, it is our own fault. Those of low degree may rejoice, if they are exalted to be *rich in faith* and *heirs of the kingdom of God* (as Dr. Whitby explains this place). And the rich may rejoice in humbling providences, as they produce a *lowly and humble disposition* of mind, which is highly valuable in the sight of God. Where any are made poor for righteousness sake, their very poverty is their exaltation. It is an honour to be dishonoured for the sake of Christ, *to you it is given to suffer*, Phil. i. 29. All that are brought low, and made lowly by grace, may rejoice in the prospect of their exaltation at last in heaven.

4. Observe what reason *rich people* have, notwithstanding their riches, to be *humble and low in their own eyes*: because both they and their riches are passing away. *As the flower of the grass he shall pass away*. He, and his wealth with him, ver. 11. *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass*. Note hence, That worldly wealth is a withering thing. Riches are too uncertain (says Mr. Baxter on this place) to inconsiderable things to make any great or just alteration in our minds. As a flower fades before the heat of the scorching sun, *so shall the rich man fade away in his ways*. His projects, counsels, managements for this world are called his ways here: In these he shall *fade away*. For this reason let him that is rich rejoice, not so much in the providence of God that makes him rich, as in the grace of God that makes and keeps him humble; and in those trials and exercises that teach him to seek his felicity in and from God, and not from these perishing enjoyments.

IV. A blessing is pronounced on those who *endure their exercises* and trials, as here directed, ver. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*. Observe, 1. It is not the man that *suffers only* who is blessed, but he that *endures*; who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of his duty. Observe, 2. That afflictions cannot make us miserable if it be not our own fault. A blessing may arise from them, and we may be blessed in them. They are so far from *taking away* a good man's felicity, that they really increase it. Observe, 3. That sufferings and temptations are the way to *eternal blessedness*. *When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life*, *δικην ζωης*, when he is approved; when his graces are found to be true, and of the highest worth: (So metals are tried as to their excellency by the fire;) And his integrity is manifested, and all is approved of the great Judge. Note hence, That to be approved of God is the great aim of a Christian in all his trials: and it will be his blessedness at last, when he shall receive the crown of life. The tried Christian shall be a crowned one: And the crown he shall wear will be a crown of life. It will be life and bliss to him, and it will last for ever. We only bear the cross for a while, but we shall wear the crown to eternity.

4. Observe, That this blessedness and crown of life, is a *promised thing* to the righteous sufferer. It is therefore what we may most surely depend upon; For when *heaven and earth shall pass away*, this word of God shall *not fail of being fulfilled*. But without let us take notice that our future reward comes not as a debt, but by a gracious promise.

5. Observe, That our enduring temptations must be from a *principle of love* to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, or otherwise we are not interested in this promise, *The Lord hath promised to them that love him*. St. Paul supposes that a man may for some point of religion even give his body to be burnt, and yet not be pleasing to God, nor regarded by him, because of his want of charity, or a prevailing sincere love to God and man, 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

6. Observe, the crown of life is promised not only to *great and eminent saints*, but to all those that have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every soul that truly loves God, shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above, *where love is made perfect*.

13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. 14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. 15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16. Do not err, my beloved brethren, 17. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

We are here taught several things.

1. We are taught that God is *not the author of any man's sin*. Whoever they are that raise persecutions against good men, and whatever injustice and sin they may be guilty of in *proceeding against them*, God is not to be charged with it. And whatever sins good men may themselves be provoked to by their exercises and afflictions, God is not the cause of them. It seems to be here supposed that some professors might fall in the hour of temptation: That the rod *resting upon them*, might carry some into ill courses, and make them *put forth their hands into iniquity*. But though this should be the case, and though such delinquents should attempt to lay their fault on God; yet the blame of their miscarriages must lie entirely upon themselves. For,

1. There is nothing in the nature of God that they can lay the blame upon. *Let no man say when he is tempted to take any evil course, or do any evil thing, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil*. All moral evil is owing to some disorder in the being that is chargeable with it: either to want of wisdom, or want of power, or want of decorum or purity in the will. But who can impeach the holy God with the want of these which are his very essence? No exigence of affairs can ever tempt him to dishonour or deny himself, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil.

2. There is nothing in the *providential dispensations* of God, that the blame of any man's sin can be laid upon, ver. 13. *Neither tempteth he any man*. As God cannot be tempted with evil himself, so neither can he be a tempter of others. He cannot be a promoter of what is repugnant to his nature. The carnal mind is willing to charge its own sins on God. There is something hereditary in this: Our first father Adam tells God, that *the woman thou gavest me tempted me*: Thereby, in effect, throwing the blame upon God, for giving him the temper. Let no man speak thus. It is

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very bad to sin; but it is much worse when we have done amiss, to charge it upon God, and say *it was long of him*. They that lay the blame of their sins upon their constitution, or upon their condition in the world, or pretend they are under a fatal necessity of sinning, they wrong God, as if he was the author of sin. Afflictions, as sent by God, are designed to draw out our graces, but not our corruptions.

II. We are taught, *where the true cause* of evil lies, and where the blame ought to be laid, ver. 14. *Every man is tempted* (in an ill sense) *when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*. In other scriptures the devil is called the tempter; and other things may sometimes concur to tempt us; but neither the devil nor any other person or thing is to be blamed so as to excuse ourselves: For the true original of evil and temptation is in our own hearts. The combustible matter is in us, though the flame may be blown up by some outward causes. And therefore, *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*, Prov. ix. 12.

Observe here, 1. The method of sin in its proceeding. First it draws away, then entices.

As holiness consists of two parts, forsaking that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good; so these two things reversed, are the two parts of sin; The heart is carried from that which is good, and enticed to cleave to that which is evil. It is first by corrupt inclinations, or by lusting after, and coveting some sensual or worldly thing, estranged from the life of God; and then by degrees fixed in a course of sin.

2. We may observe from hence the power and policy of sin. The word here rendered drawn away, signifies a being forcibly haled or compelled. The word translated and enticed, signifies being wheedled and beguiled by allurements and deceitful representations of things. *ἑκχόμενος καὶ διαλόμενος*. There is a great deal of force done to conscience, and to the mind, by the power of corruption; And there is a great deal of cunning, and deceit, and flattery in sin to gain us to its interests. The force and power of sin could never prevail, were it not for its cunning and guile. Sinners that perish are wheedled and flattered to their own destruction. And this will justify God for ever in their damnation, that they destroy themselves. Their sin lies at their own door, and therefore their blood will lie upon their own heads.

3. Observe the force of corruption in their heart, ver. 15. *Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin*. This is, sin being allowed to excite desires in us, it will soon ripen those desires into consent; and then it is said to have conceived: The sin truly exists, though it be but in embryo. And when it is grown to its full size in the mind, it is then brought forth into actual execution. Stop the beginnings of sin therefore, or else all the evils it produces must be wholly charged upon us.

4. Observe the final issue of sin, and how it ends: *Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death*. After sin is brought forth in actual commissions, the *finishing of it* (as Dr. Manton observes) is its being strengthened by frequent acts and settled into an habit. And when the iniquities of men are thus filled up, death is brought forth. There is a death upon the soul, and death comes upon the body: And besides death spiritual and temporal, the wages of sin is eternal death too. Let sin therefore be repented of, and forsaken before it be finished. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. God has no pleasure in your death, as he has no hand in your sin; but both sin and misery is owing to yourselves. Your own hearts lusts and corruptions are your tempters; and when by degrees they have carried you off from God, and finished the power and dominion of sin in you, then they will prove your destroyers.

III. We are taught yet farther, that whilst we are the authors and procurers of all sin and misery to ourselves, *God is the father and fountain of all good*, ver. 16, 17. We should take particular care not to err in our conceptions of God, *do not err, my beloved brethren, μηδεν αμαρτανειν do not wander*, that is, from the word of God, and the accounts of him you have there. Do not stray into erroneous opinions, and go off from the standard of truth; the things which you have received from the Lord Jesus, and by the direction of the Spirit. The loose opinions of Simon, and the Nicolaitans (from whom the Gnostics, a most sensual corrupt set of people arose afterwards) may perhaps by the apostle here, be more especially cautioned against. Those who are minded to look into these, may consult the first book of Irenaeus against heresies; let corrupt men run into what notions they will, the truth as it is in Jesus stands thus; that God is not, cannot be the author and patronizer of any thing that is evil; but must be acknowledged as the cause and spring of every thing that is good, ver. 17. *Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, &c.*

Here observe, 1. God is the *Father of lights*. The visible light of the sun and the heavenly bodies is from him: He said, *Let there be light, and there was light*. Thus God is at once represented as the Creator of the sun, and in some respects compared to it. "As the sun is the same in its nature and influences, though the earth and clouds oft interposing, make it seem to us as varying; by its rising and setting, and by its different appearances, or entire withdrawal; when the change is not in it: So God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any mutability, or shadowy alterations in him, but from ourselves." Mr. Baxter. The Father of lights, *with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, and glory; *aye, and infinitely more*. For,

2. Observe, *every good gift is from him*. As the Father of lights, he gives the light of reason: *The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding*, Job xxxii. 8. He gives also the light of learning: Solomon's wisdom in the knowledge of nature, and in the arts of government, and in all his improvements, is ascribed to God. The light of divine revelation is more immediately from above. The light of faith, purity, and all manner of consolation, is from him. So that we have nothing good but what we receive from God; as there is no evil or sin in us, or done by us, but what is owing to ourselves. We must own God as the author of all the powers and perfections that are in the creature, and the giver of all the benefits which we have in and by those powers and perfections: But none of their darkneses, their imperfections, or their ill actions are to be charged on the *Father of lights*; from him proceeds every good and perfect gift, both pertaining to this life and that which is to come.

3. Observe that as every good gift is from God, so particularly the renovation of our natures, our regeneration, and all the holy, happy consequences of it, must be ascribed to him, ver. 18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, &c.* Here let us take notice, 1. That a true Christian is a creature begotten anew. He becomes as different a person from what he was, before the renewing influences of divine grace, as if he were formed over again, and born afresh. 2. The original of this good work is here declared. It is of God's own will; not by our skill or power; not from any good foreseen in us, or done by us, but purely from the goodwill and grace of God. 3. The means whereby this is effected are pointed out: *The word of truth*, i. e. the gospel; as St. Paul expresses it more plainly, 1. Cor. iv. 15. *I have begotten you in Jesus Christ through the Gospel*. This gospel is indeed a *word of truth*; or else it could never produce such real, such lasting, such great and noble effects. We may rely upon it, and

venture our immortal souls upon it: And we shall find it a means of our sanctification as it is a *word of truth*, John xvii. 17. 4. The end and design of God's giving renewing grace is here laid down; *That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures*: That we should be God's portion and treasure, and a more peculiar property to him, as the first fruits were. And that we should become holy to the Lord as the first fruits were consecrated to him. Christ is the first-fruits of Christians, Christians are the first-fruits of creatures.

19. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. 20. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. 21. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24. For he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 26. If any man among you seem to be religious and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 27. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

In this part of the chapter we are required,

I. To restrain the workings of passion. This lesson we should learn under afflictions; and this we shall learn if we are indeed begotten again by the word of truth. For thus the connection stands: An angry and hasty spirit is soon provoked to ill things by afflictions, and errors and ill opinions become prevalent through the ill workings of our own vile and vain affections: But the renewing grace of God and the word of the gospel teach us to subdue these; *Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, &c.* This may refer,

1. To the word of truth spoken of in the verse foregoing. And so we may observe, that it is our duty rather to *hear God's word*, and apply our minds to understand it, than to speak according to our own fancies or the opinions of men, and to run into heat and passion thereupon. Let not such errors as that of God's being the occasion of men's sin, ever be hastily, much less angrily mentioned by you (and so as to other errors); but be ready to hear and consider what God's word teaches us in all such cases. 2. This may be applied to the afflictions and temptations spoken of in the beginning of the chapter. And then we may observe, that it is our duty rather to hear how God explains his providences, and what he designs by them; than to say as David did in his haste, *I am cut off*; or as Jonah did in his passion, *I do well to be angry*. Instead of censuring God under our trials, let us open our ears and hearts to hear what he will say to us. 3. This may be understood as referring to the disputes and differences that Christians, in those times of trial, were running into among themselves: and so this part of the chapter may be considered without any connection with what goes before. And here we may observe that, whenever matters of difference arise among Christians, each side should be willing to hear the other. People are many times stiff in their own opinions, because they are not willing to hear what others have to offer against them: whereas we should be *swift to hear reason and truth on all sides, and be slow to speak* any thing that should prevent this: And when we do speak, there should be nothing of wrath; for *a soft answer turneth away wrath*: And this epistle is designed to correct a variety of disorders that were among Christians, these words [*swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*] may be very well interpreted according to this last explication: And we may further observe from them, that if men would govern their tongues, they must govern their passions: When Moses's spirit was provoked, *he spake unadvisedly with his lips*: If we would be *slow to speak*, we must be *slow to wrath*.

II. A very good reason is given for suppressing of anger, ver. 20. *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. It is as if the apostle had said, whereas men often pretend zeal for God and his glory in their heat of passion, let them know that God need not the passions of any man; his cause is better served by mildness and meekness, than by wrath and fury. Solomon says, *the words of the wise are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools*, Eccles. ix. 17. Dr. Manton here says of some assemblies, "That if we were as *swift to hear*, as we are ready to *speak*, there would be less of *wrath*, and more of profit in our meetings. I remember when a Manichee contested with Augustine, and with importunate clamour cried, *Hear me! Hear me!* the father modestly replied, *Nec ego te, nec tu me, sed ambo audiamus apostolum*: Neither let me hear thee, nor do thou hear me, but let us both hear the apostle. The worst thing we can bring to a religious controversy is anger; This, however, it pretends, to be raised by a concern for what is just and right, yet is not to be trusted: *Wrath* is a human thing, and the *wrath of man* stands opposed to the *righteousness of God*: Those who pretend to serve the cause of God hereby, shew that they are neither acquainted with God nor his cause: This passion must especially be watched against when we are hearing the word of God: See 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

III. We are called upon to suppress other corrupt affections, as well as rash anger, ver. 21. *Lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*. The word here translated *filthiness*, signifies those lusts which have the greatest turpitude and sensuality in them; and the words rendered *superfluity of naughtiness*, may be understood of the overflowings of malice or any other spiritual wickednesses: Hereby we are taught, as Christians, to watch against and lay aside, not only those more gross and fleshly dispositions and affections which denominate a person filthy, but all the disorders of a corrupt and naughty heart, which would prejudice it against the word and ways of God.

Observe, 1. That sin is a defiling thing; it is called *filthiness* itself. 2. That there is abundance of that which is evil in us to be watched against; there is *superfluity of naughtiness*. 3. It is not enough to restrain evil affections, but they must be cast from us, or laid apart, Isa. xxx. 22. *Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say, Get ye hence*. 4. This must extend, not only to outward sins, and greater abominations, but to all sin of thought and affection, as well as speech and practice; *πᾶσι πονηρίαις*;

All filthiness, every thing that is corrupt and sinful. 5. Observe, from the foregoing parts of this chapter, that the laying apart *all filthiness*, is what a time of temptation and affliction calls for, and is necessary to the avoiding of error, and rightly receiving and improving the word of truth: For, IV. We are here fully, though briefly, instructed concerning hearing the word of God.

1. We are required to prepare ourselves for it, ver. 21. to get rid of every corrupt affection, and of every prejudice and prepossession, and to lay aside those sins which pervert the judgment and blind the mind: *All that filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*, before explained, must, in an especial manner be subdued and cast off, by all such as attend on the word of the gospel.

2. We are directed how to hear it: *Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls*. 1. In hearing the word of God, we are to receive it; assent to the truths of it, consent to the laws of it; receive it as the stock does the graft; so as that the fruit which is produced may be, not according to the nature of the four stock, but according to the nature of the word of the gospel which is *ingrafted* into our souls. 2. We must therefore yield ourselves to the word of God, with most submissive, humble, and tractable tempers: This is to *receive it with meekness*. Being willing to hear of our faults, and taking it not only patiently, but thankfully; desiring also to be moulded and formed by the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. 3. In all our hearing we should aim at the salvation of our souls: It is the design of the word of God to make us *wise to salvation*; and they that propose any meaner or lower ends to themselves in attending upon it, dishonour the gospel, and disappoint their souls. We should come to the word of God (both to read and hear it) as those that know it is the *power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*, Rom. i. 16.

3. We are taught what is to be done after hearing, ver. 22. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*. Observe here, 1. That hearing is in order to doing; the most attentive and the most frequent hearing of the word of God will not avail us, unless we be also doers of it: If we were to hear a sermon every day of the week, and an angel from heaven were the preacher, yet, if we rested in bare hearing, it would never bring us to heaven: therefore the apostle insists much upon it (and, without doubt, it is indispensably necessary) that we practice what we hear. "There must be inward practice by meditation, and outward practice in true obedience." Mr. Baxter. It is not enough to remember what we hear, and to be able to repeat it, and to give testimony to it, and commend it, and write it, and preserve what we have written, but that which all this is in order to, and which crowns the rest is, that we be *doers of the word*. Observe, 2. That bare hearers are self-deceivers; the original word *παροτρυνόμενοι* signifies men's arguing sophistically to themselves; their reasoning is manifestly deceitful and false, when they would make one part of their work discharge them from the obligation they lie under to another; or persuade themselves, that filling their heads with notions is sufficient, though their hearts be empty of good affections and resolutions, and their lives fruitless of good works: Self-deceit will be found the worst deceit at last.

4. The apostle shews what is the proper use of the word of God, and who they are that do not use it as they ought, and who they are that do make a right use of it, ver. 23, 24, 25. Let us consider each of these distinctly. 1. The use we are to make of God's word may be learnt from its being compared to a glass, in which a man may behold his natural face. As a looking-glass shews us the spots and defilements upon our faces that they may be remedied and washed off; so the word of God shews us our sins that we may repent of them and get them pardoned; and shews us what is amiss, that it may be amended. There are glasses that will flatter people, but that which is truly the word of God is no flattering glass: If you flatter yourselves, it is your own fault; the truth as it is in Jesus, flatters no man: Let the word of truth be carefully attended to, and it will set before you the corruption of your nature, the disorders of your hearts and lives; it will tell you plainly what you are. St. Paul describes himself as insensible of the corruption of his nature till he saw himself in the glass of the law, Rom. vii. 9. *I was alive without the law*, i. e. I took all to be right with me, and thought myself not only clean, but, compared with the generality of the world, that I was beautiful too; but when the commandment came, when the glass of the law was set before me, then sin revived and I died; then I saw my spots and deformities, and discovered that amiss in myself, which before I was not aware of; and such was the power of the law, and of sin, that I then perceived myself in a state of death and condemnation. Thus, when we attend to the word of God, so as to see ourselves, our true state and condition, to rectify what is amiss, and to form and dress ourselves anew by the glass of God's word, this is to make a proper use of it. 2. We have here an account of those who do not use this glass of the word as they ought, ver. 24. *He that beholdeth himself, and goes his way, and straitway forgetteth what manner of man he was*. This is the true description of one that hears the word of God, and does it not. How many are there that, when they sit under the word, are affected with their own sinfulness, and misery, and danger, acknowledge the evil of sin, acknowledge their need of Christ, but when their hearing is over, all is forgotten, convictions are lost, good affections are vanished, and pass away like the waters of a land flood; he *straitway forgets*, &c. "The word of God, (as Dr. Manton speaks) discovereth how we may do away our sins, and deck and attire our souls with the righteousness of Jesus Christ: *Maculae sunt peccata quae ostendit lex; aqua est sanguis Christi quem ostendit evangelium*: Our sins are the spots which the law discovers: Christ's blood is the laver which the gospel shews." But in vain do we hear God's word, and look into the gospel-glass, if we go away, and forget our spots, instead of washing them off, and forget our remedy instead of applying to it: This is the case of those who do not hear the word as they ought. 3. Those also are described, and pronounced *blessed*, that hear aright, and that use the glass of God's word as they should do, ver. 25. *Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, &c.* Observe here that the gospel is a law of liberty, or as Mr. Baxter expresses it, of liberation, giving us deliverance from the Jewish law, and from sin and guilt, and wrath and death: The ceremonial law was a yoke of bondage, the gospel of Christ is a law of liberty. Observe again, that it is a perfect law; nothing can be added to it. Observe farther, That in hearing the word we look into this perfect law; we consult it for counsel and direction; we look into it, that from thence we may take our measures: But observe withal, that then only do we look into the law of liberty as we should, when we continue therein. "When we dwell in the study of it, till it turn to a spiritual life, ingrafted and digested in us," Mr. Baxter. When we are not forgetful of it, but practise it as our work and business; set it always before our eyes, and make it the constant rule of our conversation and behaviour, and model the temper of our minds by it. Observe once more from this place, That they who thus do, and continue in the law and word of God, are and shall be blessed in their deed; blessed in all their ways, according to the first psalm, which some think St. James here alludes to: *He that meditates in the law of God, and walks according to it, the Psalmist says, shall prosper in whatsoever he does, And he that is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work which God's*

word sets him about, St. James says, *shall be blessed*. The papists pretend that here we have a clear text to prove we are blessed for our good deeds; but Dr. Manton, in answer to that pretence, puts the reader upon marking the distinctness of scripture phrase: The apostle does not say, for his deeds that any man is blessed, but in his deed. This is a way in which we shall certainly find blessedness, but not the cause of it. This blessedness does not lie in knowing, but in doing the will of God, John xiii. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. It is not talking, but walking, that will bring us to heaven.

V. The apostle next informs us how we may distinguish betwixt a *vain religion*, and that which is pure and approved of God. Great and hot disputes there are in the world about this matter: what religion is false and vain, and what is true and pure. I wish men would agree to let the holy scripture in this place determine the question: And here it is plainly and peremptorily declared,

1. What is a *vain religion*, ver. 26. *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain*. Here are three things to be observed: 1. In a *vain religion* there is much of shew, and affecting to seem religious in the eyes of others. This, I think, is mentioned in a manner that should fix our thoughts on the word *seemeth*: When men are more concerned to seem religious than really to be so, it is a sign their religion is but vain: Not that religion itself is a vain thing; they do it a great deal of wrong to say, *It is in vain to serve the Lord*; but it is possible people may make it a vain thing if they have only a *form of godliness*, and not the power. 2. In a *vain religion* there is much censuring, reviling, and detracting of others: The *not bridling the tongue* here, is chiefly meant of not abstaining from these evils of the tongue. When we hear people ready to speak of the faults of others, or to censure them as holding scandalous errors, or to lessen the wisdom and piety of those about them, that themselves may seem the wiser and better, this is a sign that they have but a *vain religion*: That man who has a detracting tongue, cannot have a truly humble gracious heart: He that delights to injure his neighbour, in vain pretends to love God; therefore a reviling tongue will prove a man a hypocrite: Censuring is a pleasing sin, extremely compliant with nature; and therefore evidences a man's being in a natural state. These sins of the tongue were the great sins of that age in which St. James writ (as other parts of this epistle fully shew), and it is an ill sign of a *vain religion* (says Dr. Manton) to be carried away with the evil of the times. This has ever been a leading sin with hypocrites, that the more ambitious they have been to seem well themselves, the more free they are in censuring and running down others; and there is such a quick intercourse betwixt the tongue and the heart, that the one may be known by the other. On these accounts it is that the apostle has made an ungoverned tongue an undoubted certain proof of a *vain religion*: There is no strength nor power in that religion which will not enable a man to *bridle his tongue*. 3. In a *vain religion* a man deceiveth his own heart; he goes on in such a course of detracting from others, and making himself seem somebody, that at last the vanity of his religion is confuted by the deceiving of his own soul. When once religion comes to be a vain thing, how great is the vanity!

2. It is here plainly and peremptorily declared wherein true religion consists, ver. 27. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this*. Observe, 1. It is the glory of religion to be pure and undefiled; not mixed with the inventions of men, nor the corruptions of the world. False religions may be known by their impurity and uncharitableness; according to that of St. John, he that doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother, 1 John iii. 10. But on the other hand, an holy life, and a charitable heart shew a true religion. Our religion is not (says Dr. Manton) adorned with ceremonies, but purity and charity. And it is a good observation of his, that a religion which is pure should be kept undefiled. Observe, 2. That religion is pure and undefiled, which is so before God and the Father. That is right which is so in God's eye, and which chiefly aims at his approbation. True religion teaches us to do every thing as in the presence of God; and to seek his favour, and study to please him in all our actions. Observe, 3. That compassion and charity to the poor and distressed, is a very great and necessary part of true religion: *visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction*. Visiting is here put for all manner of relief which we are capable of giving to others; and fatherless and widows are here particularly mentioned, because they are generally most apt to be neglected or oppressed; but by them is meant all others that are objects of charity; all that are in affliction. It is very remarkable that if the sum of religion be drawn up in two articles, this is one, to be charitable and relieve the afflicted. Observe, 4. That an unspotted life must accompany an unfeigned love and charity; *to keep himself unspotted from the world*. The world is apt to spot and blemish the soul, and it is hard to live in it, and have to do with it, and not be defiled; but this must be our constant endeavour. Herein consists pure and undefiled religion. The very things of the world too much taint our spirits if we are much conversant with them; but the sins and lusts of the world deface and defile them very woefully indeed. St. John comprises all that is in the world, which we are not to love, under three heads; *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*; and to keep one's self unspotted from all these, is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. May God by his grace, keep both our hearts and lives clean from the love of the world, and from the temptations of wicked worldly men.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter the apostle condemns a sinful regarding of the rich, and despising the poor; which he imputes to partiality and injustice, and shews it to be an acting contrary to God, who has chosen the poor, and whose interest is often persecuted, and his name blasphemed by the rich, ver. 1—7. He shews that the whole law is to be fulfilled, and that mercy should be followed, as well as justice, ver. 8—13. He exposes the error and folly of those that boast of faith without works, telling us that this is but a dead faith, and such a faith as devils have, not the faith of Abraham, or of Rahab, ver. 14. to the end.

1. MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place: and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5. Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor

of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6. But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats? 7. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

The apostle is here reproofing a very corrupt practice: he shews how much mischief there is in the sign of *προσωποληψία*, respect of persons, which seemed to be a very growing evil in the churches of Christ, even in those early ages; and which, in these after times, has sadly corrupted and divided Christian nations and societies: And here we have,

I. A caution against this sin laid down in general, ver. 1. *My brethren have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons*. Observe here, 1. The character of Christians fully implied: they are such as have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; they embrace it, they receive it, they govern themselves by it; they entertain the doctrine, and submit to the law and government of Christ; they have it as a trust, they have it as a treasure. Observe, 2. How honourably St. James speaks of Jesus Christ; he calls him the Lord of glory; for he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Observe, 3. That Christ's being the Lord of glory, should teach us not to respect Christians for any thing so much as their relation and conformity to Christ. You that profess to believe the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the poorest Christian shall partake of equally with the rich, and to which all worldly glory is but vanity, you should not make men's outward and worldly advantages the measure of your respect: in professing the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should not shew respect to men, so as to cloud or lessen the glory of our glorious Lord: However any man may think of it, this is certainly a very heinous sin.

II. We have this sin described and cautioned against, by an instance or example of it, ver. 2, 3. *For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, &c. Assembly* here is meant of those meetings which were appointed for deciding matters of difference among the members of the church; or for determining when censures should be passed upon any, and what those censures should be; therefore the Greek word here used, *συναγωγη*, signifies such an assembly as that in the Jewish synagogues when they met to do justice. Maimonides says, (as I find the passage quoted by Dr. Manton,) "That it was expressly provided by the Jews' constitutions, that when a poor man and a rich plead together, the rich shall not be bidden to sit down, and the poor stand, or sit in a worse place, but both sit, or both stand alike." To this the phrases used by the apostle have a most plain reference, and therefore the assembly here spoken of, must be some such as the synagogue assemblies of the Jews were, when they met to hear causes, and to execute justice: To these the arbitrations and censures of their Christian assemblies are compared: But we must be careful not to apply what is here said to the common assemblies for worship; for in these certainly there may be appointed different places for persons, according to their rank and circumstances, without sin: They do not understand the apostle, who fix his severity here upon this practice; they do not mind the word *judges* used in ver. 4. nor what is said of their being convicted as *transgressors of the law*, if they had such a respect of persons as is here spoken of, according to ver. 9. Thus, now put the case: *there comes into your assembly* (when of the same nature with some of those at the synagogue) *a man that is distinguished by his dress, and that makes a figure, and there comes in also a poor man in vile raiment*, and ye carry it partially, and determine wrong or ill things, merely because the one makes a better appearance, or is in better circumstances, than the other. Observe from hence, 1. That God has his remnant among all sorts of people; among those that wear soft and gay clothing, and among those that wear poor and vile raiment. But observe, 2. That in matters of religion, rich and poor stand upon a level; no man's riches set him in the least nearer to God, nor does any man's poverty set him at a distance from God: *With the most High there is no respect of persons*, and therefore in matters of conscience there should be none with us. Observe, 3. That all undue honouring of worldly greatness and riches should especially be watched against in Christian societies: St. James does not here encourage rudeness or disorder; civil respect must be paid, and some difference may be allowed in our carriage towards persons of different ranks, but this respect must never be such as to influence the proceedings of Christian societies in disposing of the offices of the church, or in passing the censures of the church, or in any thing that is purely a matter of religion; here we are to know no man after the flesh: It is the character of a citizen of Zion, that in his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: If a poor man be a good man, we must not value him a whit the less for his poverty; and if a rich man be an ill man (though he may have both gay clothing and a gay profession) we must not value him any whit the more for his riches. Observe, 4. Of what importance it is to take care what rule we go by in judging of men; if we allow ourselves commonly to judge by outward appearance, this will too much influence our spirits and our conduct in religious assemblies: there is many a man, whose wickedness renders him vile and despicable, that yet makes a figure in the world; and on the other hand there is many an humble, heavenly, good Christian, that is clothed meanly; but neither should he nor his Christianity be thought the worse of on this account.

III. We have the greatness of this sin set forth, ver. 4, 5. It is great partiality, it is injustice, and it is to set ourselves against God, who has chosen the poor, and will honour and advance them (if good) let who will despise them.

1. In this sin there is shameful partiality: *Are ye not then partial in yourselves?* The question is here put, as what could not fail of being answered by every man's conscience that would put it seriously to himself. According to the strict rendering of the original, the question is, *Have ye not made a difference?* And, in that difference, do you not judge by a false rule and go upon false measures? And does not the charge of a partiality, condemned by the law, lie fully against you? Does not your own conscience tell you that you are guilty? Appeals to conscience are of great advantage, when we have to do with such as make a profession, even though they may be fallen into a very corrupt state.

2. This respect of persons is owing to the evil and injustice of the thoughts: As the temper, carriage, and proceedings are partial, so the heart and thoughts, from whence all flows, are evil: *Ye are become judges of evil thoughts*, i. e. *ye are judges*, according to those unjust estimations and corrupt opinions, which you have formed to yourselves: Trace your partiality, till you come to those hidden thoughts which accompany and support it, and you will find those to be exceeding evil; you secretly prefer outward pomp before inward grace, and the things that are seen before those which are not seen: The deformity of sin is never truly and fully discerned, till the evil of our thoughts be disclosed: And it is this which highly aggravates the faults of our tempers and lives, that the imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, Gen. vi. 5.

3. The *respect of persons* is a heinous sin, because it is to shew ourselves most directly contrary to God, ver. 5. *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, &c.* But ye have despised them, ver. 6. God has made them *heirs of a kingdom*, that you make of no reputation; and has given them very great and glorious promises, to whom you can hardly give a good word or a respectful look: And is not this a monstrous iniquity in you that pretend to be the children of God, and conformed to him? *Hearken, my beloved brethren*, by all the love I have for you, and all the regards you have to me, I beg you would consider these things: Take notice of it, that many of the *poor of this world are the chosen of God*: Their being *God's chosen* doth not prevent their being *poor*; their being *poor*, doth not at all prejudice the evidences of their being *chosen*, Matt. xi. 5. *The poor are evangelized*. God designed to recommend his holy religion to mens esteem and affection, not by the external advantages of gaiety and pomp, but by its intrinsic worth and excellency; and therefore *chose the poor of this world*. Again take notice, that many *poor in the world*, yet are *rich in faith*; thus the poorest may become rich; and this is what they ought to be specially ambitious of; it is expected from those who have wealth and estates, that they be *rich in good works*: because the more they have, the more they have to do good with; but it is expected from the *poor in the world*, that they be *rich in faith*; for the less they have here, the more they may, and should live in the believing expectation of better things in a better world. Take notice farther, that believing Christians are *rich in title*, and in being *heirs of a kingdom*, though they may be very poor as to present possessions; what is laid out upon them is but little; what is laid up for them is unspeakably rich and great. Note again, that where any are *rich in faith*, there will be also divine love; *faith working by love*, will be in all the heirs of glory. Note once more under this head, that heaven is a *kingdom*, and a *kingdom promised to them that love God*. We read of the *crown promised to them that love God*, in the former chapter, ver. 12. we here find there is a kingdom too: And as *the crown is a crown of life*, so *the kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom*.

All these things laid together, shew how highly the *poor in this world*, if *rich in faith*, are now honoured, and shall hereafter be advanced by God; and consequently how very ill a thing it was for them to *despise the poor*: After such considerations as these, the charge is cutting indeed; But ye have despised the poor, ver. 6.

4. *Respecting persons*, in the sense of this place, on account of their riches or outward figure, is shewn to be a very great sin, because of the mischiefs which are owing to worldly wealth and greatness, and the folly which there is in Christians paying undue regard to those who had so little regard either to their God or them. *Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seat? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, by the which ye are called?* ver. 7. Consider how commonly riches are the incentives of vice and mischief, of blasphemy and persecution: Consider how many calamities you yourself sustain, and how great reproaches are thrown upon your religion and your God, by men of wealth and power and worldly greatness; and this will make your sin appear exceeding sinful and foolish, in setting up that which tends to pull you down, and to destroy all that you are building up, and to dishonour that *worthy name, by which ye are called*: The name of Christ is a *worthy name*, and reflects an honour, and gives worth to them that wear it.

8. If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. 9. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. 10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11. For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

The apostle having condemned the sin of those who had an undue *respect of persons*; and having urged what was sufficient to convict them of the greatness of this evil, now proceeds to shew how the matter may be mended; it is the work of a gospel ministry, not only to reprove and warn, but to teach and direct, Col. i. 21. *Warning every man, and teaching every man*. And here,

1. We have the law that is to guide us in all our regards to men set down in general, ver. 8. *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well*. Let any should think St. James had been pleading for the poor, so as to throw contempt on the rich, he now lets them know, that he did not design to encourage an ill carriage toward any; they must not hate or be rude to the rich, no more than *despise the poor*; but as the scripture teacheth us to *love all our neighbours*, be they rich or poor, as ourselves, so in our having a steady regard to this rule, *we shall do well*. Observe from hence, 1. That the rule for Christians to walk by, is settled in the scriptures, *if, according to the scriptures, &c.* It is not great men, nor worldly wealth, nor corrupt practices among professors themselves that must guide us, but the scriptures of truth. Observe, 2. The scripture gives us this as a law, to *love our neighbour as ourselves*; it is what still remains in full force, and is rather carried higher and farther by Christ, than made less important to us. Observe, 3. This law is a *royal law*, it comes from the King of kings; its own worth and dignity deserves it should be thus honoured; and the state in which all Christians now are, as it is a state of liberty, and not of bondage or oppression, make this law, by which they are to regulate all their actions to one another, a *royal law*. Observe, 4. That a pretence of observing this *royal law*, when it is interpreted with partiality, will not excuse men in any unjust proceedings: It is implied here, that some were ready to flatter rich men, and be partial to them, because, if they were in the like circumstances, they should expect such regards to themselves, or, they might plead, that to shew a distinguished respect to those whom God in his providence had distinguished by their rank and degree in the world, this was but doing right; therefore the apostle allows, that, so far as they were concerned to observe the duties of the second table, they *did well, in giving honour to whom honour was due, &c.* but this fair pretence could not cover their sin, in that undue *respect of persons* which they stood chargeable with; for,

2. This general law is to be considered together with a particular law, ver. 9. *If ye have respect of persons ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors*. Notwithstanding the law of laws, *To love your neighbour as yourselves*, and to shew that respect to them you would be apt to look for yourselves if in their circumstances, yet this will not excuse your distributing either the favours or censures of the church according to mens outward condition; but here you must look to a particular law, which God, who gave the other has given you together with it, and by this you will stand fully

convicted of the sin I have charged you with; this law is in *Levit. xix. 15. Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour*. Yea, the very royal law itself, rightly explained would serve to convict them, because it teaches them to put themselves as much in the places of the poor, as in those of the rich, and so to carry it equitably toward one as well as the other. Hence he proceeds,

3. To shew the extent of the law, and how far obedience must be paid to it; they must fulfil the royal law, have a regard to one part as well as another, otherwise it would not stand them in stead, when they pretended to urge it as a reason for any particular actions, ver. 10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all*. This may be considered, 1. With reference to the case St. James has been upon: Do you plead for your respect to the rich, because you are to love your neighbour as yourselves? Why then shew also an equitable and due regard to the poor, because you are to *love your neighbour as yourself*: Or else your offending in one point, will spoil your pretence of observing that law at all: *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, if he offend in one point, wilfully, allowedly, and with continuance, and so as to think he shall be excused in some matters, because of his obedience in others, he is guilty of all*; that is, he incurs the same penalty, and is liable to the same punishment, by the sentence of the law, as if he had broken it in other points, as well as that he stands chargeable with; not that all sins are equal, but that all carry the same contempt of the authority of the lawgiver, and so bind over to such punishment as is threatened on the breach of that law. This shews us what a vanity it is to think that our good deeds will atone for our bad deeds, and plainly puts us upon looking for some other atonement. 2. This is farther illustrated by putting a case different from that before-mentioned, ver. 11. *For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law*. One, perhaps, is very severe in the case of adultery, or what tends to such pollutions of the flesh; but less ready to condemn murder, or what tends to ruin the health, break the hearts, and destroy the lives of others: Another has a prodigious dread of murder, but has more easy thoughts of adultery: whereas one that looks at the authority of the lawgiver, more than the matter of the command, will see the same reason for condemning the one as the other: Obedience is then acceptable, when all is done with an eye to the will of God; and disobedience is to be condemned, in whatever instance it be, as it is a contempt of the authority of God; and, for that reason, if we offend in one point, we condemn the authority of him that gave the whole law, and so far are guilty of all. Thus if you look to the law of old, you stand condemned; for *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10.

4. St. James directs Christians to govern and conduct themselves more especially by the law of Christ, ver. 12. *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty*. They will teach us, not only to be just and impartial but very compassionate and merciful to the poor, and it will set us perfectly free from all sordid and undue regards to the rich. Observe here, 1. The gospel is called a *law*; it has all the requisites of a law; precepts, with rewards, and punishments annexed; it prescribes duty, as well as administers comfort, and Christ is a king to rule us, as well as a prophet to teach us, and a priest to sacrifice and intercede for us. We are *under the law to Christ*. 2. It is a *law of liberty*; a law that we have no reason to complain of, as a yoke or burden; for the service of God, according to the gospel is a *perfect freedom*; it sets us at liberty from all slavish regards, either to the persons or things of this world. 3. We must all be judged by this *law of liberty*, mens eternal condition will be determined according to the gospel; this is the book that will be opened, when we shall stand before the judgment-seat; there will be no relief to those whom the gospel condemns, nor will any accusation lie against those whom the gospel justifies. 4. It concerns us therefore *so to speak and act now* as becomes those that must shortly be judged by this *law of liberty*; that is, that we come up to gospel terms, that we make conscience of gospel duties, that we be of a gospel temper, and that our conversation be a gospel conversation, because by this rule we must be judged. 5. The consideration of our being judged by the gospel, should engage us more especially to be merciful in our regards to the poor, ver. 13. *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment*. Take notice here, that the doom which will be passed upon impenitent sinners at last, will be *judgment without mercy*; there will be no mixtures or allays in the cup of wrath, and of trembling, the dregs of which they must drink. Take notice again, that such as *show no mercy* now, shall find *no mercy* in the great day: But we may note, on the other hand, that there will be such as shall become instances of the triumph of mercy, in whom *mercy rejoices against judgment*: All the children of men in the last day, will be either *vessels of wrath*, or *vessels of mercy*. It concerns all to consider amongst which they shall be found; and let us remember, that *blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*.

14. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith save him? 15. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; 16. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warned and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not these things, which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? 17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith, without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. 20. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. 23. And the scripture was fulfilled, which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. 24. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way. 26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. ::

In this latter part of the chapter, the apostle shews the error of those who rested in a bare profession of the Christian faith, as if that would save them, while the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives were altogether disagreeable to the holy religion they professed. To let them see, therefore, what a wretched foundation they built their hopes upon, it is here proved at large, *that a man is justified, not by faith only, but by works*. Now upon this arises a very great question, namely, how to reconcile St. Paul and St. James? St. Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, seems to assert the direct contrary thing to what St. James here lays down, saying it often, and with a great deal of emphasis, *that we are justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law*. Amicæ scripturarum lites, unân et nostræ! There is a very happy agreement between one part of the scripture and another, notwithstanding seeming differences: it were well if the differences among Christians were as easily reconciled. Nothing (says Mr. Baxter) but men's understanding the plain drift and sense of Paul's epistles, could make so many take it for a matter of great difficulty to reconcile Paul and James: A general view of those things which are insisted on by the Antinomians, may be seen in Mr. Baxter's paraphrase; and many ways might be mentioned, which have been invented among learned men, to make the two apostles agree; but it may be sufficient only to observe these few things following:

1. When St. Paul says, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*, Rom. iii. 28. he plainly speaks of other sort of works than St. James does, but not of another sort of faith: St. Paul speaks of works wrought in obedience to the law of Moses, and before men's embracing the faith of the gospel; and he had to do with those who valued themselves so highly upon those works, that they rejected the gospel; as Rom. x. the beginning most expressly declares; but St. James speaks of works done in obedience to the gospel, and as the proper and necessary effects and fruits of a sound believing in Christ Jesus: Both are concerned to magnify the faith of the gospel, as that which alone could save us, and justify us; but St. Paul magnifies it, by shewing the insufficiency of any works of the law before faith, or in opposition to the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ: St. James magnifies the same faith, by shewing what are the genuine and necessary products and operations of it.

2. St. Paul doth not only speak of different works from those insisted on by St. James; but he speaks of a quite different use that was made of good works, from what is here urged and intended: St. Paul had to do with those who depended on the merit of their works in the sight of God, and thus he might well make them of no manner of account: St. James had to do with those that cried up faith, but would not allow works to be used even as evidences; they depended upon a bare profession, as sufficient to justify them; and with these he might well urge the necessity and vast importance of good works: As we must not break one table of the law, by dashing it against the other; so neither must we break in pieces the law and the gospel, by making them clash with one another: Those that cry up the gospel, so as to set aside the law, and those that cry up the law so as to set aside the gospel, are both in the wrong; for we must take our work before us, there must be both faith in Jesus Christ, and good works the fruit of faith.

3. The justification of which St. Paul speaks, is different from that spoken of by St. James: the one speaks of our persons being justified before God, the other speaks of our faith being justified before men: *Shew me thy faith by thy works*, (says St. James,) let thy faith be justified in the eyes of them that behold thee by thy works: but St. Paul speaks of justification in the sight of God, who justifies them only that believe in Jesus, and purely on account of the redemption that is in him: And thus we see that our persons are justified before God by faith, but our faith is justified before men by works: And this is so plainly the scope and design of the apostle James, that he is but confirming what St. Paul, in other places says of his faith: that it is a laborious faith, and a faith working by love, Gal. v. 6. 1 Thess. i. 3. Titus iii. 8. and many other places.

4. St. Paul may be understood as speaking of that justification which is inchoate, St. James of that which is complete; it is by faith only that we are put into a justified state, but then good works come in for the completing of our justification at the last great day; then, *Come, ye children of my Father; for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, &c.*

Thus, having cleared this part of scripture from every thing of a contradiction to other parts of it, let us see what is more particularly to be learnt from this excellent passage of James; we are taught,

1. That faith without works will not profit, and cannot save us, ver. 14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?* Observe here, 1. That faith which does not save, will not really profit us; a bare profession may sometimes seem to be profitable, to gain the good opinion of those who are truly good; and it may procure in some cases, worldly good things: but what profit will this be, for any to gain the world and to lose their souls? *What doth it profit? Can faith save him?* All things should be accounted profitable or unprofitable to us, as they tend to forward or hinder the salvation of our souls: And above all other things, we should take care thus to make account of faith, as that which does not profit, if it do not save, will but aggravate our condemnation and destruction at last. Observe, 2. That for a man to have faith, and to say he has faith, are two different things; the apostle does not say, *if a man have faith without works*, for that is not a supposable case, the drift of this place of scripture is plainly to shew, that an opinion, or speculation, or assent, without works, is not faith: but the case is put thus, *If a man say he hath faith, &c.* Men may boast of that to others, and be conceited of that in themselves, which they are really destitute of.

II. We are taught, that as love and charity is an operative principle, so is faith; or that neither of them are good for any thing; and, by trying how it looks for a person to pretend he is very charitable who never yet does any works of charity, you may judge what sense there is in pretending to have faith without the proper and necessary fruits of it, ver. 15, 16, 17. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit?* What will such a charity as this, that consists in bare words, avail either you or the poor? Will you come before God with such empty shews of charity as these? Why, you might as well pretend that your love and charity will stand the test without acts of mercy, as think that a profession of faith will bear you out before God without works of piety and obedience, ver. 17. *Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone*. We are too apt to rest in a bare profession of faith, and to think that this will save us; it is a cheap and easy religion to say, *we believe the articles of the Christian faith*; but it is a great delusion to imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven; those that argue thus, wrong God, and put a cheat upon their own souls; a mock faith is as hateful as a mock charity, and both shew a heart dead to all real godliness; you may as soon take pleasure in a dead body, void of soul, or sense, or action, as God take pleasure in a dead faith, where there are no works.

III. We are taught to compare a faith of boasting of itself without works and a faith evidenced by works, by looking on both together, to try how

that will work upon our minds, ver. 18. *Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith and I have works: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*. Suppose a true believer thus pleading with a boasting hypocrite, "Thou makest a profession and sayest thou hast faith, I make no such boasts, but leave my works to speak for me. Now give any evidence of having the faith thou professest without works if thou canst, and I will soon let thee see how my works flow from, and are the undoubted evidences of, faith." This is the evidence by which the scriptures all along teach men to judge both of themselves and others. And this is the evidence according to which Christ will proceed at the day of judgment, Rev. xx. 12. *The dead will be judged according to their works*. How will they be exposed then who boast of that which they cannot evidence, or who go about to evidence their faith by any thing but works of piety and mercy!

IV. We are taught to look upon a faith of bare speculation and knowledge as the faith of devils, ver. 19. *Thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble*. That instance of faith which the apostle here chooses to mention, is the first principle of all religion. Thou believest there is a God, against the atheists; and that there is but one God, against the idolaters; thou dost well, so far all is right. But to rest here, and take up a good opinion of thyself, or of thy state towards God merely on account of thy believing in him, this will render thee miserable. *The devils also believe and tremble*. If thou contentest thyself with a bare assent to articles of faith, and some speculations upon them, thus far the devils go. And as their faith and knowledge only serve to excite horror, so in a little time will thine. The word tremble is commonly looked upon as denoting a good effect of faith; but here it may rather be taken as a bad effect, when applied to the faith of devils. They tremble not out of reverence, but hatred and opposition to that one God on whom they believe. To rehearse that article of our creed, therefore, *I believe in God the Father almighty*, will not distinguish us from devils at last, unless we now give up ourselves to God as the gospel directs; and love him, and delight ourselves in him, and serve him, which the devils do not, cannot do.

V. We are taught that he who boasts of faith without works, is to be looked upon at present as a foolish condemned person, ver. 20. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* The words translated *vain man*, *ἀσθενὴς ἄνθρωπος*, are observed to have the same signification with the word *Raca*; which must never be used to private persons, or as an effect of anger, Matt. v. 22. but may be used as here, to denote a just detestation of such a sort of men as are empty of good works, and yet boasters of their faith. And it plainly declares them fools and subjects in the sight of God. Faith without works is said to be dead, not only as void of all those operations which are the proofs of spiritual life; but as unavailable to eternal life; Such believers as rest in a bare profession of faith, are dead while they live.

VI. We are taught that a justifying faith cannot be without works, from two examples, Abraham and Rahab.

The first instance is that of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the prime example of justification; to whom the Jews had a special regard, ver. 21. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?* St. Paul on the other hand, says, in chap. iv. of the epistle to the Romans, that Abraham believed, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. But these are well reconciled by observing what is said in Heb. xi. which shews that the faith both of Abraham and Rahab, was such as to produce those good works of which St. James speaks; and which are not to be separated from faith as justifying and saving. By what Abraham did, it appeared that he truly believed. Upon this foot the words of God himself plainly put this matter, Gen. xxii. 16. *Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; therefore in blessing I will bless thee*. Thus the faith of Abraham was a working faith, ver. 22. *It wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect*. And by this means you come to the true sense of that scripture, which faith, ver. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And thus he became the friend of God. Faith producing such works endeared him to the Divine Being, and advanced him to very peculiar favours and intimacies with God. It is a great honour done to Abraham, that he is called and counted the friend of God. You see there, ver. 24. how that *by works a man is justified* [comes into such a state of favour and friendship with God] and not by faith only; not by a bare opinion or profession, or believing without obeying, but by having such a faith as is productive of good works.

Now besides the explication of this passage and example, as thus illustrating and supporting the argument St. James is upon, many other useful lessons may be learned by us from what is here said concerning Abraham. (1.) Those that would have Abraham's blessings must be careful to copy after his faith: To boast of being Abraham's seed will not avail any, if they do not believe as he did. (2.) Those works which evidence true faith, must be works of self-denial, and such as God himself commands, (as Abraham's offering up his son, his only son, was) and not such works as are pleasing to flesh and blood, and may serve our interest, or are the mere fruits of our own imagination and devising. 3. What we piously purpose and sincerely resolve to do for God, is accepted as if actually performed. Thus Abraham is regarded as offering up his son, though he did not actually proceed to make a sacrifice of him. It was a done thing in the mind and spirit, and resolution of Abraham, and God accepts it as fully performed and accomplished. 4. The actings of faith make it grow perfect, as the truth of faith makes it act. 5. Such an acting faith will make others as well as Abraham, friends of God. Thus Christ faith to his disciples, John xv. 15. *I have called you friends*. All transactions betwixt God and the truly believing soul are easy, pleasant, and delightful. There is one will and one heart, and there is a mutual complacency. *God rejoiceth over them* that truly believe, to do them good; and they delight themselves in him.

The second example of faith's justifying itself and us with and by works, is Rahab, ver. 25. *Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* The former instance was of one renowned for his faith all his life long. This is one noted for sin, whose faith was meener and of a much lower degree, so that the strongest faith will not do, nor the meaneest be allowed to go, without works. Some say, that the word here rendered harlot, was the proper name of Rahab. Others tell us, that it signifies no more than an hostess, or one that keeps a public house, with whom therefore the spies lodged. But it is very probable her character was infamous; and such an instance is mentioned to shew that faith will save the worst, when evidenced by proper works; and it will not save the best without such works as God requires. This Rahab believed the report she had heard of God's powerful presence with Israel; but that which proved her faith sincere was, that to the hazard of her life she received the messengers, and sent them out another way. Observe, here, 1. The wonderful power of faith in transforming and changing sinners. 2. The regard which an operative faith meets with from God, to obtain his mercy and favour. 3. Observe, that where great sins are pardoned, there must be great acts of self-denial. Rahab must prefer the honour of God and

the good of his people before the preservation of her own country. Her former acquaintance must be discarded, and her former course of life entirely abandoned; and she must give signal proof and evidence of this, before she can be in a justified state. After she is justified, yet her former character must be remembered. Not so much to her dishonour, as to glorify the rich grace and mercy of God. Though justified, she is called Rahab the harlot.

And now upon the whole matter the apostle draws this conclusion, ver. 26. *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* These words are read differently; some reading them as the body without the breath is dead, so is faith without works. And then they shew that works are the companions of faith, as breathing is of life. Others read them, as the body without the soul is dead, so faith without works is dead also: and then they shew, that as the body has no action, nor beauty, but becomes a loathsome carcase when the soul is gone, so a bare profession without works is useless, yea, loathsome and offensive.

Let us then take heed of running into the extremes in this case. For, 1. *The best works without faith are dead.* They want their root and principle. It is by faith that any thing we do, is really good; as done with an eye to God, and in obedience to him, and so as to aim principally at his acceptance. 2. *The most plausible profession of faith without works is dead.* As the root is dead when it produceth nothing green, nothing of fruit. Faith is the root, good works are the fruits, and we must see to it that we have both. We must not think that either, without the other, will justify and save us. This is the grace of God wherein we stand, and we should stand to it.

C H A P. III.

The apostle here reproves ambition, and an arrogant magisterial tongue; shews the duty and advantage of bridling it, because of its power to do mischief. Those who profess religion ought especially to govern their tongues, ver. 1—12. True wisdom makes men meek, and avoiders of strife and envy: And hereby may easily be distinguished from a wisdom that is earthly and hypocritical, ver. 13. to the end.

1. **M**Y brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. 3. Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4. Behold, also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasting great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8. But the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12. Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

The foregoing chapter shews how unprofitable and dead faith is without works; it is plainly intimated by what this chapter first goes upon, that such a faith is, however, apt to make men conceited and magisterial in their tempers and their talk. Those who set up faith in the manner the former chapter condemns, are most apt to run into those sins of the tongue, which this chapter condemns. And indeed the best need to be cautioned against a dictating, censorious, mischievous use of their tongues. We are therefore taught,

1. Not to use our tongues so as to lord it over others, ver. 1. *My brethren, be not many masters, &c.* These words do not forbid doing what we can to direct and instruct others in the way of their duty, or to reprove them in a Christian way for what is amiss; but we must not affect to speak and act as those that are continually assuming the chair. We must not prescribe to one another, so as to make our own sentiments a standard, by which to try others, because God gives various gifts to men, and expects from each according to that measure of light which he gives. Therefore be not many masters or teachers as some read it. Do not give yourselves the air of teachers, and imposers, and judges, but rather speak with the humility and spirit of learners. Do not censure one another, as if all must be brought to your standard. This is enforced by two reasons. 1. Those who thus set up for judges and censurers, shall receive the greater condemnation. Our judging others will but make our own judgment the more strict and severe, Matt. vii. 1. Those who are curious to spy out the faults of others, and arrogant in passing censures upon them, may expect that God will be as extreme in marking what they say and do amiss. 2. Another reason given against such acting the master is, because we are all sinners, ver. 2. *In many things we offend all.* Were we to think more of our own mistakes and offences, we should be less apt to judge other people. Whilst we are severe against what we count offensive in others, we do not consider how much there is in us which is justly offensive to them. Self-justifiers are commonly self-deceivers. We are all guilty before God. And they that vaunt it over the frailties and infirmities of others, little think how many things they offend in themselves. Nay perhaps their magisterial managements, and censorious tongues, may prove worse than any faults they can condemn in others. Let us learn to be severe in judging ourselves, but charitable in our judgments of other people.

2. We are taught to govern our tongues so as to prove ourselves perfect and upright men and as such as have an entire government over ourselves. If

any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. It is here implied, that he who makes conscience of tongue-sins, and takes care to avoid them, is an upright man, and has an undoubted sign of true grace. But on the other hand, if a man seem to be religious (as was declared in the first chapter) and bridleth not his tongue: whatever profession he makes, that man's religion is vain. Farther, he that offends not in word, will not only prove himself a sincere Christian, but a very much advanced and improved Christian. For that wisdom and grace which enables him to rule his tongue, will enable him also to rule all his actions. This we have illustrated by two comparisons.

1. The governing and guiding all the motions of a horse, by the bit, which is put into his mouth, ver. 3. *Behold we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body.* There is a great deal of brutish fierceness and wantonness in us. This shews itself very much by the tongue: So that this must be bridled; according to Psalm xxix.

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle* [or, I will bridle my mouth] while the wicked is before me. The more quick and lively the tongue is, the more should we thus take care to govern it. Otherwise as an unruly and ungovernable horse runs away with his rider or throws him, so an unruly tongue will serve those in like manner that have no command over it. Whereas, let resolution and watchfulness, under the influence of the grace of God, bridle the tongue, and then all the motions and actions of the whole body will be easily guided and over-ruled.

2. The governing of a ship by the right management of the helm, ver. 4, 5. *Behold also the ships, and though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth: Even so, the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things.* As the helm is a very small part of the ship, so is the tongue a very small part of the body: But the right governing of the helm or rudder, will steer and turn the ship as the governor pleases; and a right management of the tongue is, in a great measure, the government of the whole man. There is a wonderful beauty in these comparisons, to shew how things of small bulk, yet may be of vast use. And from hence we should learn to make the due management of our tongues more our study; because, though they are little members, they are capable of doing a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt. Therefore,

III. We are taught to dread an unruly tongue as one of the greatest and most pernicious evils. It is compared to a little fire placed among a great deal of combustible matter; which soon raises a flame and consumes all before it; ver. 5, 6. *Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, &c.* There is such an abundance of sin in the tongue, that it may be called a world of iniquity. How many defilements does it occasion? How many and dreadful flames does it kindle? So is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body. Observe, from hence there is a great pollution and defilement in sins of the tongue. Defiling passions are kindled and vented, and cherished by this unruly member. And the whole body is often drawn into sin and guilt by the tongue. Therefore Solomon says, *suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin*, Eccles. v. 6. The snares into which men are sometimes led by the tongue, are insufferable to themselves, and destructive of others. It setteth on fire the course of nature. The affairs of mankind and of societies are often thrown into confusion, and all is on a flame by the tongues of men. Some read it, all our generations are set on fire by the tongue. There is no age of the world, nor any condition of life, private or public, but will afford examples of this. And it is set on fire of hell. Observe from hence, that hell has more to do in promoting the fire of the tongue than men are generally aware of. It is from some diabolical temptations, and to serve some diabolical designs, that men's tongues are inflamed. The devil is expressly called a liar, a murderer, an accuser of the brethren; and whenever men's tongues are employed any of these ways, they are set on fire of hell. The Holy Ghost indeed once descended in cloven tongues as of fire, Acts ii. And where the tongue is thus guided and wrought upon by a fire from heaven, there it kindleth good thoughts, holy affections and ardent devotions. But when it is set on fire of hell, as in all undue heats it is, there it is mischievous; producing rage and hatred, and those things which serve the purposes and designs of the devil. As therefore you would dread fires and flames, you would dread contentions, revilings, slanders, lies, and every thing that would kindle the fire of wrath in your own or others spirits. But,

IV. We are next taught how very hard a thing it is to govern the tongue, ver. 7, 8. *For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame.* As if the apostle had said, lions, and the most savage beasts, as well as horses and camels, and creatures of the greatest strength, have been tamed and governed by men; And so have birds, notwithstanding their wildness and timorousness, and their wings to bear them up continually out of our reach. And even serpents, notwithstanding all their venom, and all their cunning, yet have been made familiar and harmless. And things in the sea have been taken by men, and made serviceable to them. And these creatures have not been subdued or tamed only by miracle; (as the lions crouched to Daniel instead of devouring him; and ravens fed Elijah; and a whale carried Jonah through the depths of the sea to dry land) but what is here spoken of is something commonly done; not only hath been tamed; but is tamed of mankind. Yet the tongue is worse than these, and cannot be tamed by that power and art which serves to tame these things. No man can tame the tongue without supernatural grace and assistance. The apostle does not intend to represent it as a thing impossible, but as a thing extremely difficult; and therefore will require great watchfulness, and pains, and prayer, to keep it in due order. And sometimes all is too little, for it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Brute creatures may be kept within certain bounds, they may be managed by certain rules, and even serpents may be so used as to do no hurt with all their poison; But the tongue is apt to break through all bounds and rules, and to spit out its poison on one occasion or other, notwithstanding the utmost care. So that it does not need only to be watched, and guarded, and governed as much as an unruly beast, or a hurtful and poisonous creature; but much more care and pains will be needful to prevent the mischievous out-breakings and effects of the tongue. However,

V. We are taught to think of the use we make of our tongues in religion and in the service of God, and by such a consideration to keep it from cursing, censurings, and every thing that is evil on other occasions, ver. 9, 10. *Therewith bless we God even the Father: and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth the blessing and cursing: My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* How absurd is it that they who use their tongues in prayer and praises should ever use them in cursing, slandering, and the like? If we bless God as our father, it should teach us to speak well of, and kindly to, all that bear his image. That tongue that addresses with reverence to the divine being, cannot, without the greatest inconsistency, turn upon fellow-creatures with reviling, brawling language. It is said of the Seraphim that praise God, they dare not bring a railing accusation. And for men to reproach those who have not only the image of God in their natural faculties, but are renewed after the image of God by the grace of the gospel, this is a most shameful contradiction.

dition to all their pretensions of honouring the great original. *These things ought not so to be*; and, if such considerations were always at hand, surely they would not be. Piety is disgraced in all the shews of it, if there be not charity. That tongue confutes itself, that one while pretends to adore the perfections of God, and to refer all things to him, and another while will condemn even good men, if they do not just come up to the same words or expressions used by itself.

Further, to fix this thought, the apostle shews that contrary effects from the same causes are monstrous, and not to be found in nature, and therefore cannot be consistent with grace, ver. 11, 12. *Doth a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? Or doth the same spring yield both salt water and fresh?* True religion will not admit of contradictions; and a truly religious man can never allow of them either in his words or his actions. How many sins would this prevent, and recover men from, to put them upon being always consistent with themselves!

13. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom. 14. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lye not against the truth. 15. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. 17. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

As the sins before condemned arise from an affectation of being thought more wise than others, and being endowed with more knowledge than they; so the apostle in these verses shews the differences betwixt men's pretending to be wise, and their being really so; and betwixt the wisdom which is from beneath, from earth or hell, and that which is from above.

I. We have some account of true wisdom, with the distinguishing marks and fruits of it, ver. 13. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom.* A truly wise man is a very knowing man: He will not set up for the reputation of being wise, without laying in a good stock of knowledge; and he will not value himself merely upon knowing things, if he has not wisdom to make a right application and use of that knowledge. These two things must be put together, to make up the account of true wisdom: who is wise and endued with knowledge? now where this is the happy case of any there will be these following things.

1. *A good conversation.* If we are wiser than others, this should be evidenced by the goodness of our conversation; not by the roughness or vanity of it. Words that inform, and heal, and do good, are the marks of wisdom; and not those that look great, and do mischief, and are the occasions of evil, either in ourselves or others.

2. True wisdom may be known by its works. Their conversation here does not refer only to words, but to the whole of men's practice; therefore it is said, let him shew out of a good conversation his works. True wisdom does not lie in good notions or speculations, so much as in good and useful actions. Not he that thinks well, or he that talks well, that in the sense of the scripture is allowed to be wise, if he do not live and act well.

3. True wisdom may be known by the meekness of the spirit and temper. *Let him shew with meekness, &c.* It is a great instance of wisdom prudently to bridle our own anger, and patiently to bear the anger of others. And as wisdom will evidence itself in meekness, so meekness will be a great friend to wisdom. For nothing hinders that regular apprehension, solid judgment, and impartiality of thought, which is necessary to our acting wisely, so much as passion doth. When we are mild and calm, we are best able to hear reason, and best able to speak it. Wisdom produces meekness, and meekness increaseth wisdom.

II. We have the glorying of those taken away, that are of a contrary character to that now mentioned; and their wisdom exposed in all its boasts and productions, ver. 14, 15, 16. *If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, &c.* Pretend what you will, and think yourselves never so wise, yet you have abundance of reason to cease your glorying, if you run down love and peace, and give way to bitter envying and strife. Your zeal for truth or orthodoxy, and your boasts of knowing more than others, if you do this only to make others hateful, and to shew your own spite and heart-burnings against them, is a shame to your profession of Christianity, and a downright contradiction to it. Lye not thus against the truth.

Observe, 1. That envying and strife are opposed to the meekness of wisdom. The heart is the seat of both; but envy and wisdom cannot dwell together in the same heart. Holy zeal and bitter envying are as different as the flames of seraphim and the fire of hell. Observe, 2. The order of things here laid down. Envying is first, and excites strife; strife endeavours to excuse itself by vain-glorying and lying; and then, ver. 16. hereupon ensues confusion and every evil work. Those that live in malice, and envy, and contention, they live in confusion; and are liable to be provoked and hurried to any evil work. Such disorders raise many temptations, and strengthen temptations, and involve men in a great deal of guilt. One sin begets another, and it cannot be imagined how much mischief is produced; there is every evil work. And is such wisdom to be gloried in, as produces these effects? This cannot be without giving the lie to Christianity; and pretending that this wisdom is what it is not. For observe, 3. From whence such wisdom cometh. *It descendeth not from above, but ariseth from beneath*; and, to speak plainly, it is earthly, sensual, devilish, ver. 15. It springs from earthly principles, and acts upon earthly motives, and is intent upon serving earthly purposes. It is sensual, indulging the flesh, and making provision to fulfil the lusts and desires of it. Or according to the original word, *ψυχικη*, it is animal or human; the mere working of natural reason, without any supernatural light. And it is devilish; such wisdom being the wisdom of devils, to create uneasiness and to do hurt. And being inspired by devils, whose condemnation is pride, 1 Tim. iii. 6. and who are noted in other places of scripture for their wrath, and their accusing of the brethren: And therefore those, who are lifted up with such wisdom as this, must fall into the condemnation of the devil.

III. We have the lovely picture of that wisdom which is from above more fully drawn, and set in opposition to this which is from beneath, ver. 17, 18. *But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, &c.*

Observe here, That true wisdom is God's gift. It is not gained by

conversing with men, or by the knowledge of the world (as some think and speak) but it comes from above. And it consists of these several things: 1. It is pure without mixture of maxims or aims that would debase it. And it is free from iniquity and defilements, not allowing of any known sin, but studious of holiness both in heart and life. 2. The wisdom that is from above is peaceable. Peace follows purity, and depends upon it. Those who are truly wise, do what they can to preserve peace, that it may not be broken; and to make peace, that where it is lost it may be restored. In kingdoms, in families, in churches, in all societies, and in all affairs and converses, heavenly wisdom makes men peaceable. 3. It is gentle, not standing upon extreme right in matters of property; not saying or doing any thing rigorous in points of censure; not being furious about opinions; urging our own beyond their weight, or theirs who oppose us beyond their intention; not being rude or overbearing in conversation, nor harsh and cruel in temper. Gentleness may thus be opposed to all these. 4. Heavenly wisdom is easy to be intreated, *εὐμενής*, it is very persuadable, either to what is good, or from what is evil. There is an easiness that is weak and faulty; but it is not a blameable easiness to yield ourselves to the persuasions of God's word; and to all just and reasonable counsels or requests of our fellow-creatures, or not to give up a dispute, where there appears a good reason for it, and a good end may be answered by it. 5. Heavenly wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits. Inwardly disposed to every thing that is kind and good, both to relieve those that want, and forgive those that offend, and actually to do this whenever proper occasions offer. 6. Heavenly wisdom is without partiality. The original word, *ἀδιαφορη*, signifies to be without suspicion, or free from judging. Making no undue surmises, or differences in our carriage towards one person more than another. The margin reads it without wrangling. Not acting the part of sectaries, and disputing merely for the sake of a party; or censuring others purely on account of their differing from us. The wisest men are least apt to be censurers. 7. That wisdom which is from above is without hypocrisy. It has no disguises nor deceptions. It cannot fall in with those managements the world counts wise, which are crafty and guileful; but it is sincere, and open, and steady, and uniform, and consistent with itself. O that you and I might always be guided by such wisdom as this! that with St. Paul, we might be able to say, *not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have our conversation.* And then lastly, true wisdom will go on to sow the fruits of righteousness in peace, and thus, if it may be, to make peace in the world, ver. 18. And that which is sown in peace will produce a harvest of joys. Let others reap the fruits of contentions, and all the advantages they can propose to themselves by them; but let us go on peaceably to sow the seeds of righteousness, and we may depend upon it our labour shall not be lost. *For light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter we are directed to consider, 1. Some causes of contention, besides those mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and to watch against them, ver. 1—5. 2. We are taught to abandon the friendship of this world so as to submit and subject ourselves entirely to God, ver. 4—10. 3. All detraction and rash judgment of others is to be carefully avoided, ver. 11, 12. 4. We must preserve a constant regard, and pay the utmost deference to the disposals of divine providence, ver. 13. to the end.

1. FROM whence come wars and fightings amongst you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4. Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. 5. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6. But he giveth more grace: wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7. Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The former chapter speaks of envying one another, as the great spring of strifes and contentions; this chapter speaks of a lust after worldly things, and a setting too great a value upon worldly pleasures and friendships, as that which carried their divisions to a shameful height; and therefore the apostle here,

1. Reproves the Jewish Christians for their wars, and for their lusts, as the cause of them, ver. 1. *From whence come wars and fighting amongst you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* The Jews were a very seditious people, and had therefore frequent wars with the Romans; and they were a very quarrelsome, divided people, often fighting among themselves; and many of those corrupt Christians, against whose errors and vices this epistle was written, seem to have fallen in with the common quarrels; hereupon our apostle informs them, that the original of their wars and fightings was not (as they pretended) a true zeal for their country, and for the honour of God, but their prevailing lusts were the cause of all. Observe from hence, That many times what is sheltered and shrouded under a specious pretence of zeal for God and religion, yet really comes from men's pride, malice, covetousness, ambition, and revenge: The Jews had many struggles with the Roman power, before they were entirely destroyed; they often unnecessarily embroiled themselves, and then fell into parties and factions about the different methods of managing their wars with their common enemies, and hence it comes to pass, that when their cause might be supposed good, yet their engaging in it, and their management of it came from a bad principle; their worldly and fleshly lusts raised

raised and managed their wars and fightings; but one would think, here is enough said to subdue those lusts: for, 1. They make a war within, as well as fightings without: impetuous passions and desires first war in their members, and then raise feuds in their nation; there is a war between conscience and corruption, and there is war also between one corruption and another; and from these contentions in themselves arise their quarrels with each other. Apply this to private cases, and may we not then say of fightings and strifes among relations and neighbours, that they come from those lusts which war in the members? From lust of power and dominion, lust of pleasure, or lust of riches, from some one or more of these lusts, arise all the broils and contentions that are in the world; and since all wars and fightings come from the corruptions of our own hearts, it is therefore the right method, for the cure of contention, to lay the axe to the root, and mortify those lusts that war in the members. 2. It should kill these lusts to think of their disappointment, ver. 2. *Ye lust, and have not, ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain*; you covet great things for yourselves, and you think to obtain them by your victories over the Romans, or by suppressing this and the other party among yourselves; you think you shall secure great pleasures and happiness to yourselves, by overthrowing every thing that thwarts your eager wishes; but alas, you are losing your labour and your blood, while you kill one another with such views as these: inordinate desires are either totally disappointed, or however, not to be appeased and satisfied by obtaining the things desired; the words here rendered *cannot obtain*, signify, cannot gain the happiness sought after. Note hence, That worldly and fleshly lusts are a distemper which will not allow of contentment or satisfaction in the mind. 3. Sinful desires and affections generally exclude prayer, and the workings of our desires towards God; *Ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not*: You fight and do not succeed, because you do not pray; You do not consult God in your undertaking, whether he allow of them or not; and you do not commit your way to him, and make known your requests to him, but follow your own corrupt views, and inclinations, therefore you meet with continual disappointments; or else, 4. Your lusts spoil your prayers, and make them an abomination to God, whenever you put them up to him, ver. 3. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss that you may consume it upon your lusts*, As if it had been said though perhaps you may sometimes pray for success against your enemies, yet it is not your aim to improve the advantages you gain, so as to promote true piety and religion, either in yourselves or others; but pride, and vanity, and luxury, and sensuality, is what you would serve by your successes, and by your very prayers; you want to live in great power and plenty, in voluptuousness and in sensual prosperity; and thus you disgrace devotion, and dishonour God by such gross and base ends; and therefore your prayers are rejected.

Let us learn from hence, in the management of all our worldly affairs, and in our prayers to God for success in them, to see that our ends be right. When men follow their worldly business (suppose them tradesmen or husbandmen) and ask of God prosperity, but do not receive what they ask for, it is because they ask with wrong aims and intentions; they ask God to give them success in their callings or undertakings, not that they may glorify their heavenly Father, and do good with what they have, but that they may consume it upon their lusts; that they may be enabled to eat better meat, and drink better drink, and wear better clothes, and so gratify their pride, and vanity, and voluptuousness. But if we thus seek the things of this world, it is just in God to deny them; whereas, if we seek any thing that we may serve God with it, we may expect he will either give what we seek for, or give us hearts to be content without it, and give opportunities of serving and glorifying him some other way: Let us remember this, that when we speed not in our prayers, it is because we ask amiss; either we do not ask for right ends, or not in a right manner; not with faith, or not with fervency; unbelieving and cold desires beg denials; and this we may be sure of, that when our prayers are rather the language of our lusts than of our graces, they will return empty.

2. We have fair warning to avoid all criminal friendships with this world, ver. 4. *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* Worldly people are here called *adulterers and adulteresses*, because of their perfidiousness to God, while they give their best affections to the world: *Covetousness* is elsewhere called *idolatry*, and it is here called *adultery*; it is a forsaking him to whom we are devoted and espoused, to cleave to other things; there is this brand put upon worldly-mindedness, that it is *enmity to God*; A man may have a competent portion of the good things of this life, and yet may keep himself in the love of God; but he that sets his heart upon the world, that places his happiness in it, and will conform himself to it, and do any thing rather than lose its friendship, he is an *enemy to God*; it is constructive treason and rebellion against God, to set the world upon his throne in our hearts: *Whoever therefore would be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*; He that will act upon this principle, to keep in the smiles of the world, and to have its continual friendship, cannot but shew himself in spirit, and in his actions too, an *enemy to God*; *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*, Matt. iv. 24.

From hence arise wars and fightings, even from this adulterous, idolatrous love of the world, and serving of it: For what peace can there be among men, so long as there is enmity towards God? Or, who can fight against God and prosper? Think seriously with yourselves what the spirit of the world is, and you will find that you cannot suit yourselves to it as friends, but it must occasion your being envious, and full of evil inclinations, as the generality of the world are. Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, *The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy*? ver. 5. The account given in the holy scriptures of the hearts of men by nature is, that their imagination is evil, only evil, and that continually, Gen. vi. 5. natural corruption principally shews itself by envying, and there is a continual propensity to this; the spirit which naturally dwells in man, is always producing one evil imagination or another, always enviously such as we see and converse with, and seeking those things which are possessed and enjoyed by them; now this way of this world, affecting pomp and pleasure, and falling into strifes and quarrels for the sake of these things, is the certain-consequence of being friends to the world; for there is no friendship without a usefulness of spirit; and therefore Christians, to avoid contentions, must avoid the friendship of the world, and must shew that they are acted by noble principles, and that a nobler spirit dwelleth in them; for if we belong to God, he giveth more grace than to live and act as the generality of the world do. The spirit of the world teaches men to be churls, God teaches them to be bountiful; the spirit of the world teaches us to lay up, or lay out for ourselves, and according to our own fancies; God teaches us to be willing to communicate to the necessities, and to the comfort of others, and thus to do good to all about us according to our ability. The grace of God is contrary to the spirit of the world, and therefore the friendship of the world is to be avoided, if we pretend to be friends of God: Yea, the grace of God will correct and cure the spirit that naturally dwells in us; where he giveth grace, he giveth another-guest spirit than that of the world.

3. We are taught to observe the difference God makes betwixt pride and

humility, ver. 6. *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

This is represented as the language of scripture in the Old Testament; for so it is declared in the book of *Psalms*, that God will save the afflicted people (if their spirits be suited to their condition) but will bring down high looks, Psalm xviii. 27. and in the book of *Proverbs* it is said, *He scorneth the scornors, and giveth grace to the lowly*, Prov. ii. 34. Two things are here to be observed: 1. The disgrace cast upon the proud; *God resisteth them*; the original word, *ἀνταρσέναι*, signifies, God's setting himself as in battle array against them: and can there be a greater disgrace than for God to proclaim a man a rebel, an enemy, a traitor to his crown and dignity, and to proceed against him as such? *The proud resisteth God*; in his understanding he resisteth the truths of God; in his will he resisteth the laws of God; in his passions he resisteth the providence of God; and therefore no wonder that God sets himself against the proud: Let proud spirits hear this and tremble, *God resisteth them*. Who can describe the wretched state of those that make God their enemy? He will certainly fill the faces of such with shame, sooner or later, as they have filled their hearts with pride: We should therefore resist pride in our hearts, if we would not have God to resist us. Observe, 2. The honour and help God gives to the humble; grace, as opposed to disgrace, is honour; this God gives to the humble; and where God gives grace to the humble, there he will give all the graces; and as in the beginning of this sixth verse, he will give more grace: Wherever God gives true grace, he will give more; for to him that hath, and useth what he hath aright, more shall be given; He will especially give more grace to the humble, because they see their need of it, will pray for it, and be thankful for it; and such shall have it: For this reason,

4. We are taught to submit ourselves entirely to God, ver. 7. *Submit yourselves therefore to God; Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. Christians should forsake the friendship of the world, and watch against that envy and pride which they see prevailing in natural men, and should by grace learn to glory in their submissions to God. Submit yourselves to him, as subjects to their prince, in duty, and, as one friend to another, in love and interest: Submit your understandings to the truths of God; submit your will, to the will of God, the will of his precept, the will of his providence. We are subjects, and as such must be submissive: not only through fear, but through love not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. Submit yourselves to God, as considering how many ways you are bound to this, and considering what advantage you will gain by it: for God will not hurt you by his dominion over you, but will do you good.

Now as this subjection and submission to God is what the devil most industriously strives to hinder, so we ought with great care and steadiness to resist his suggestions: If he would represent a tame yielding to the will and providence of God as what will bring calamities, and expose to contempt and misery, we must resist these suggestions of fear: If he would represent submissions to God as a hindrance to our outward ease, or worldly preferences, we must resist these suggestions of pride and sloth: If he would tempt us to lay any of our miseries, and crosses, and afflictions, to the charge of providence, so that as we might avoid them by following his directions instead of God's, we must resist these provocations to anger, not fretting ourselves in anywise to do evil; Let not the devil, in these or the like attempts prevail upon you; but resist him and he will flee from you; If we basely yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow us; but if we put on the whole armour of God, and stand it out against him, he will be gone from us: Resolution shuts and bolts the door against temptation.

5. We are directed how to carry it towards God in our becoming submissive to him, ver. 8, 9, 10. 1. *Draw nigh to God*; the heart, that has rebelled, must be brought to the foot of God; the spirit that was distant and estranged from a life of communion and converse with God must become acquainted with him; draw nigh to God, in his worship and institution, and in every duty he requires of you. 2. *Cleanse your hands*; he that comes unto God, must have clean hands; St. Paul therefore directs to *lift up holy hands without wrath or doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. hands free from blood and bribes, and every thing that is unjust or cruel; and free from every defilement of sin; he is not subject to God who is a servant of sin; the hands must be cleansed by faith, repentance, and reformation, or it will be in vain for us to draw nigh to God in prayer, or in any of the exercises of devotion. 3. *The hearts of the double-minded must be purified*; those that halt between God and the world, are here meant by the double-minded; to purify the heart, is to be sincere, and to act upon this single aim and principle, rather to please God, than to seek after any thing in this world; hypocrisy is heart impurity; but they who submit themselves to God aright, will purify their hearts, as well as cleanse their hands. 4. *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*; what afflictions God sends, take them as he would have you, and be duly sensible of them; be afflicted when afflictions are set upon you, and do not despise them; or be afflicted in your sympathies with those that are so, and in laying to heart the calamities of the church of God mourn, and weep for your own sins and the sins of others; times of contention and division are times to mourn in; and the sins that occasion wars and fightings should be mourned for; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. This may be taken, either as a predilection of sorrow, or a prescription of seriousness; let men think to set grief at defiance, yet God can bring it upon them; none laugh so heartily, but he can turn their laughter into mourning; and this the unconcerned Christians St. James wrote to be threatened should be their case; they are therefore directed, before things come to the worst, to lay aside their vain mirth and their sensual pleasures, that they might indulge to godly sorrow and penitential tears: 5. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord*; let the inward acts of the soul be suitable to all those outward expressions of grief, affliction and sorrow before mentioned; humility of spirit is here required, as in the sight of him who looks principally at the spirits of men; let there be a thorough humiliation in bewailing every thing that is evil; let there be great humility in doing that which is good; humble yourselves.

6. We have great encouragement to carry it thus towards God; he will draw nigh to them that will draw nigh to him, ver. 8. and he will lift up those that humble themselves in his sight, ver. 10. Those that draw nigh to God in a way of duty, shall find God drawing nigh to them in a way of mercy: Draw nigh to him in faith, and trust, and obedience, and he will draw nigh to you for your deliverance. If there be not a close communion between God and us, it is our fault, and not his: He shall lift up the humble. Thus much our Lord himself declared, *He that shall humble himself shall be exalted*, Matt. xxiii. 12. If we are truly penitent and humble under the marks of God's displeasure, we shall in a little time know the advantages of his favour; he will lift us up out of trouble; or he will lift us up, in our spirits and comforts, under trouble; he will lift us up to honour and safety in the world, or he will lift us up in our way to heaven, so as to raise our hearts and affections above the world; God will revive the spirit of the humble, Isa. lviii. 15. and he will hear the desire of the humble, Psalm x. 17. and he will at last lift them up to glory. Before honour is humility. The highest honour in heaven will be the reward of the greatest humility on earth.

11. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? 13. Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: 14. Whereas ye know not what *shall* be on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17. Therefore to him, that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.

In this part of the chapter we are,

1. Cautioned against the sin of evil-speaking, ver. 11. *Speak not evil one of another, brethren.* The Greek word, *καλαζαντι*, signifies speaking any thing that may hurt or injure another; we must not speak evil things of others, though they are true, unless we be called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for it; much less must we report evil things when they are false, or for ought we know may be so; our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice; this, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, *that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and her tongue is the law of kindness*, Prov. xxxi. 26. must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian. *Speak not evil one of another*, (1.) Because ye are brethren. The compellation, as used by the apostle here, carries an argument along with it: Since Christians are brethren, they should not revile or defame one another; it is required of us, that we be tender of the good name of our brethren; where we cannot speak well, we had better say nothing than speak evil; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, merely to expose them; nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve; and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading things concerning them, of which they are altogether innocent; what is this but to raise the hatred, and encourage the persecutions of the world, against those who are engaged in the same interests with yourselves, and therefore with whom you yourselves must stand and fall? Consider ye are brethren. (2.) *Speak not evil one of another*, because this is to judge the law: *He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law.* The law of Moses says, *Thou shalt not go up and down, as a tale-brearer among thy people*, Levit. xix. 16. The law of Christ is, *Judge not, that ye be not judged*, Matt. vii. 1. The sum and substance of both is, that men should love one another: A detracting tongue therefore condemns the law of God, and the commandment of Christ, when it is defaming its neighbour: To break God's commandments is, in effect, to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they were too strict, and laid too great a restraint upon us. The Christians to whom St. James wrote were apt to speak very hard and ill things of one another, because of their differences about indifferent things (such as the observance of meats and days, as appears from Rom. xiv.) now, says the apostle, he that censures and condemns his brother for not agreeing with him in those things which the law of God has left indifferent, thereby censures and condemns the law, as if it had done ill in leaving them indifferent; he that quarrels with his brother, and condemns him for the sake of any thing not determined in the word of God, does thereby reflect on that word of God, as if it were not a perfect rule; let us take heed of judging the law, for the law of the Lord is perfect; if men break the law, leave that to judge them; if they do not break it, let not us judge them: This is an heinous evil, because it is to forget our place, that we ought to be doers of the law, and it is to set up ourselves above it, as if we were to be judges of it: he that is guilty of this sin here cautioned against, is not a doer of the law, but a judge; he assumes an office and place that does not belong to him, and he will be sure to suffer for it in the end: Those that are most ready to set up for judges of the law, generally fail most in their obedience to it. (3.) *Speak not evil one of another*, because God, the lawgiver, has reserved the power of passing the final sentence on men wholly to himself, ver. 12. *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?* Princes and states are not excluded, by what is here said, from making laws; nor are subjects at all encouraged to disobey human laws: but God is still to be acknowledged as the supreme lawgiver, who only can give law to the conscience, and who alone is to be absolutely obeyed. His right to enact laws is incontestible, because he has such a power to enforce them; he is able to save and to destroy, so as none other can; he has power fully to reward the observance of his laws, and to punish all disobedience; he can save the soul and make it happy for ever; or he can, after he has killed, cast into hell: and therefore should be feared and obeyed as the great lawgiver, and all judgment should be committed to him. Since there is one lawgiver, we may infer, that it is not for any man or company of men in the world, to pretend to give laws immediately to bind conscience; for that is God's prerogative which must not be invaded: As the apostle had before warned against being many masters, so here he cautions against being many judges; let us not prescribe to our brethren, let us not censure and condemn them; it is sufficient that we have the law of God, which is a rule to us all; and therefore we should not set up other rules; let us not presume to set up our own particular notions and opinions as a rule to all about us; there is one lawgiver, &c.

2. We are cautioned against a presumptuous confidence of the continuance of our lives, and against forming projects thereupon with assurance of success, ver. 13. 14. The apostle having reproved those who were judges and condemnors of the law, now reproves such as were disregarding of providence: *Go to now*, an old way of speaking, designed to engage attention, the Greek word may be rendered, *behold now! or see, and consider! ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain.* Reflect a little on this way of thinking and talking, call yourselves to account for it. Serious reflection on our words and ways, would shew us many evils that we are apt, through inadvertency, to run into and continue in. There were some that said of old, as too many say still, *We will go to such a city, and do this or that*, for such a term of time, whilst all serious regards to the disposal of providence were neglected. Observe here,

(1.) How apt worldly and projecting men are to leave God out of their schemes: where any are set upon earthly things, these have a strange power of ingrossing the thoughts of the heart; we should therefore have a cure of

growing intent or eager in our pursuits after any thing here below. Observe, (2.) How much of worldly happiness lies in the promises men make to themselves beforehand; their heads are full of fine visions, as to what they shall do, and be, and enjoy in some future time, when they can neither be sure of time, nor of any of the advantages they promise themselves; therefore observe, (3.) How vain a thing it is to look for any thing good in futurity, without the concurrence of providence: *We will go to such a city*, (say they) perhaps to Antioch, or Damascus, or Alexandria, which were then the great places for traffick; but how could they be sure, when they set out, that they should reach any of these cities? something might possibly stop their way, or call them elsewhere, or cut the thread of life: Many that have set out on a journey, have gone to their long home, and never reached their journey's end: But suppose they should reach the city they designed for, how did they know they should continue there; something might happen to send them back, or to call them from thence, and to shorten their stay: Or suppose they should stay the full time they proposed, yet they could not be certain that they should buy and sell there; perhaps they might lie sick there, or they might not meet with those to trade with them that they expected: Yea suppose they should go to that city, and continue there a year, and should buy and sell, yet they might not get gain; getting of gain in this world is at best but an uncertain thing, and they might probably make more losing bargains than gainful ones; and then, as to all these particulars, the frailty, shortness, and uncertainty of life, ought to check the vanity and presumptuous confidence of such projectors for futurity, ver. 14. *What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* God hath wisely left us in the dark concerning future events, and even concerning the duration of life itself: we know not what shall be on the morrow; we know what we intend to do, and to be, but a thousand things may happen to prevent us; we are not sure of life itself, since it is but as a vapour: something in appearance, but nothing solid or certain; easily scattered and gone: We can fix the hour and minute of the sun's rising and setting to-morrow, but we cannot fix the certain time of a vapour's being scattered; such is our life; it appears but for a little time, and then vanisheth away: it vanisheth us to this world, but there is a life that will continue in the other world; and since this life is so uncertain, it concerns us all to prepare and lay up in store for that to come.

3. We are taught to keep up a constant sense of our dependence on the will of God, for life, and all the actions and enjoyments of it, ver. 15. *Ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.* The apostle having reproved them for what was amiss, now directs them how to be and do better: *Ye ought to say it in your hearts at all times*, and with your tongues upon proper occasions, especially in your constant prayers and devotions, that if the Lord will give leave, and if he will own and bless you, that you have such and such designs to accomplish; this must be said, not in a slight, and formal, and customary way, but so as to think what we say, and so as to be reverent and serious in what we say: It is good to express ourselves thus when we have to do with others, but it is indispensably requisite that we should say this to ourselves in all that we go about. *Evangelium* i. e. with the leave and blessing of God, was used by the Greeks in the beginning of every undertaking. 1. *If the Lord will, we shall live.* We must remember that our times are not in our own hands, but at the disposal of God; we live as long as God appoints, and in the circumstances God appoints, and therefore must be submissive to him, even as to life itself; and then, 2. *If the Lord will, we shall do this or that.* All our actions and designs are under the control of heaven; our heads may be filled with cares and contrivances, this and the other thing we may propose to do for ourselves, or our families, or our friends, but providence sometimes breaks all our measures, and throws our schemes into confusion; therefore both our counsels for action, and our conduct in action, should be entirely referred to God; all we design, and all we do, should be with a submissive dependence on God.

4. We are directed to avoid vain boasting, and to look upon it not only as weak, but a very evil thing, ver. 16. *Ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.* They promised themselves life and prosperity, and great things in the world, without any just regard to God; and then they boasted of these things: Such is the joy of worldly people, to boast of all their successes, yea many times to boast of their very projects before they know what success they shall have! How common is it for men to boast of things which they have no other title to, but what arises from their own vanity and presumption! *Such rejoicing* (says the apostle) *is evil*; it is foolish, and it is hurtful for men to boast of worldly things, and of their aspiring projects, when they should be attending to the humbling duties before laid down (in ver. 8, 9, 10.) is a very ill thing; it is a great sin in God's account, it will bring great disappointments upon themselves, and will prove their destruction in the end: If we rejoice in God, that our times are in his hand, that all events are at his disposal, and that he is our God in covenant, this rejoicing is good; the wisdom, power, and providence of God, are then concerned to make all things *work together for our good*; but if we rejoice in our own vain confidences and presumptuous boasts, this is evil; it is an evil carefully to be avoided by all wise and good men.

5. We are taught, in the whole of our conduct, to act up to our own convictions, and, whether we have to do with God or men, to see that we never go contrary to our knowledge, ver. 17. *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin*; it is aggravated sin; it is sinning with a witness; and it is to have the worst witness against a man that can be, when he sins against his own conscience. Observe, That this stands immediately connected to the plain lesson of saying, *If the Lord will, we shall do this or that*; they might be ready to say, this is a very obvious thing: who knows not that we all depend upon Almighty God for life, and breath, and all things? remember then, if you do know this, that whenever you carry it unsuitably to such a dependence, *to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin*, the greater sin. Observe again, That omissions are sins which will come into judgment, as well as commissions; he that does not the good he knows should be done, as well as he that does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned. Let us therefore take care that conscience be rightly informed, and then that it be faithfully and constantly obeyed: for if our own hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; but if we say we see, and do not act suitably to our light, then our sin remaineth, John ix. 41.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter the apostle denounces the judgments of God upon those rich men that oppress the poor, shewing them how great their sin and folly is in the sight of God, and how grievous the punishment would be which should fall upon themselves, ver. 1-6. Hereupon all the faithful are exhorted to patience under their trials and sufferings, ver. 7-11. The sin of swearing is cautioned against, ver. 12. We are directed how to carry it, both under affliction, and in prosperity, ver. 13. Prayer for the sick, and anointing with oil, are prescribed, ver.

14, 15. *Christians are directed to acknowledge their faults one to another, and to pray one for another, and the efficacy of prayer is proved.* ver. 16, 17, 18. *And lastly, it is recommended to us to do what we can for the reducing of them that stray from the ways of truth.*

1. **G**O to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire; ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4. Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton: ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you. 7. Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. 8. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

The apostle is here addressing first to sinners, and then to saints.

1. Let us consider the address to sinners: and here we find St. James seconding what his great master had said, *Wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation*, Luke vi. 24. The rich people, to whom this word of warning is sent, were not such as professed the Christian religion, but the worldly and unbelieving Jews, such as are here said to *condemn and kill the just*, which the Christians had no power to do; and though this epistle was written for the sake of the faithful, and was sent principally to them, yet, by an apostrophe, the infidel Jews may be well supposed here spoken to; they would not hear the word, and therefore it is written that they might read it; and it is observable in the inscription of this epistle, that it is not directed, as Paul's epistles were, *to the brethren in Christ*, but, in general, *to the twelve tribes*; and the salutation is not, *grace and peace from Christ*, but, in general, *greetings*, chap. i. 1. The poor among the Jews received the gospel, and many of them believed; but the generality of the rich rejected Christianity, and were hardened in their unbelief, and hated and persecuted those that believed on Christ; to these oppressing, unbelieving, persecuting, rich people, the apostle directs himself in the first six verses.

(1.) He foretells the judgments of God that should come upon them, ver. 1, 3. they should have miseries come upon them, and such dreadful miseries that the very apprehension of them were enough to make them *weep and howl*; misery that should arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness, and misery that should be completed by these things *witnessing against them* at the last to their utter destruction; and they are now called to reason upon, and thoroughly to weigh the matter, and to think how they will stand before God in judgment; *Go to now, ye rich men*. 1. You may be assured of this, that very dreadful calamities are coming upon you, calamities that shall carry nothing of support or comfort in them, but all misery; misery in time, misery to eternity; misery in your outward afflictions, misery in your inward frame and temper of mind; misery in this world, misery in hell: You have not a single instance of misery only coming upon you, but miseries; the ruin of your church and nation is at hand; and there will come a day of wrath when riches shall not profit men, but *all the wicked shall be destroyed*. 2. The very apprehension of such miseries as were coming upon them, is enough to make them *weep and howl*; Rich men are apt to say to themselves (and others are ready to say to them) *eat, drink, and be merry*; but God says, *weep and howl*: It is not said, *weep and repent*, for this the apostle does not expect from them; (he speaks in a way of denouncing rather than admonishing) but *weep and howl*; as when your doom comes there will be nothing but *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*; those that live like beasts, are called to *howl* like such: Public calamities are most grievous to rich people, that live in pleasure, and are secure and sensual; and therefore they shall weep and howl more than other people *for the miseries that shall come upon them*. 3. Their misery shall arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness; corruption, decay, rust, and ruin, will come upon all your goodly things; ver. 2. *Your riches are corrupted, and your garment are moth-eaten*: These things, which you now inordinately affect, will hereafter insupportably wound you: They will be of no worth, of no use to you, but, on the contrary, will pierce you through with many sorrows: For, 4. *They will witness against you, and they will eat your flesh, as it were fire*, ver. 3. Things innumerate are frequently represented in scripture as witnessing against wicked men: Heaven, earth, the stones of the field, the production of the ground, and here the very rust and canker of ill-gotten and ill-kept treasures, are said to witness against impious rich men. They think to *heap up treasure for their last days*, to live plentifully upon when they come to be old; but, alas! they are only heaping up treasure to become a prey to others; (as the Jews had all taken from them by the Romans) and treasures that will prove at last to be only *treasures of wrath, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; then shall their iniquities, in the punishment of them, *eat their flesh, as it were fire*: In the ruin of Jerusalem, many thousands perished by fire; in the last judgment the wicked shall be condemned to everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels.

The Lord deliver us from the portion of wicked rich men! and, in order to this, let us take care that we do not fall into their sins, which we are next to consider.

(2.) The apostle shews what those sins are which should bring such miseries: To be in so deplorable a condition, must doubtless be owing to

some very heinous crime: 1. Covetousness is laid to the charge of this people; they laid by their garments till they bred moths, and were eaten; they hoarded up their gold and silver till they were rusty and cankered; it is a very great disgrace to these things, that they carry in them the principles of their own corruption and consumption; the garment breeds the moth that frets it, the gold and silver breeds the canker that eats it; but the disgrace falls most heavy upon those who hoard and lay up these things till they come to be thus corrupted, and cankered, and eaten: God gives us our worldly possessions that we may honour him, and do good with them; but if, instead of that, we sinfully hoard them up, through an undue affection towards them, or a distrust of the providence of God for the future, this is a very heinous crime, and will be witnessed against by the very rust and corruption of the treasure thus heaped together. 2. Another sin charged upon those against whom St. James writes, is oppression, ver. 4. *Behold the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, &c.* Those that have wealth in their hands, get power into their hands, and then they are tempted to abuse that power to oppress such as are under them: The rich we here find employing the poor in their labours, and the rich have as much need of the labours of the poor, as the poor have of wages from the rich, and could as ill be without them; but yet, not considering this, they kept back the hire of the labourers; having power in their hands, it is probable they made as hard bargains with the poor as they could; and, even after that, would not make good their bargain as they should have done: This is a crying sin, an iniquity that cries so, as to reach the ears of God; and, in this case, God is to be considered as the Lord of sabaoth, or the Lord of hosts, *κύριος σαβωθ*; a phrase often used in the Old Testament, when the people of God were defenceless, and wanted protection: and when their enemies were numerous and powerful: The Lord of hosts, who has all ranks of beings and creatures at his disposal, and who sets all in their several places, he hears the oppressed when they cry by reason of their cruelty or injustice of the oppressor, and he will give orders to some of those hosts that are under him (angels, devils, storms, distempers, or the like) to avenge the wrongs done to those who are dealt with unrighteously and unmercifully: Take heed of this sin of defrauding and oppressing, and avoid the very appearances of it. 3. Another sin here mentioned is sensuality and voluptuousness, ver. 5. *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton, &c.* God doth not forbid us to use pleasures; but to live in them as if we lived for nothing else, is a very provoking sin; and to do this on the earth, where we are but strangers and pilgrims, where we are to continue but for a while, and where we ought to be preparing for eternity; this, this is a grievous aggravation of the sin of voluptuousness: Luxury makes people wanton, as in Hos. xiii. 6. *According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.* Wantonness and luxury are commonly the effects of great plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great estates, and not too much indulge themselves in carnal, sensual pleasures: *Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter*: Ye live as if it was every day a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby your hearts are fattened and nourished to stupidity, and dulness, and pride, and an insensibility of the wants and afflictions of others. Why, some may say, what harm is there is good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have? What! Is it no harm for people to make gods of their bellies, and to give all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging to the appetites of their bodies? Surely that which brought flames upon Sodom, and would bring these miseries, for which rich men are here called to weep and howl, must be a heinous evil! Pride, and idleness, and fulness of bread, mean the same thing with living in pleasure, and being wanton, and nourishing the heart as in a day of slaughter. 4. Another sin here charged on the rich was persecution, ver. 6. *Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.* This fills up the measure of their iniquity. They oppressed, and acted very unjustly, to get estates; when they had them, they gave way to luxury and sensuality, till they had lost all sense and feeling of others' wants or afflictions; and then they persecute and kill without remorse: they pretend to act legally indeed, they condemn before they kill; but unjust persecutions, whatever colour of law they may carry in them, will come into the reckoning when God shall make inquisition for blood, as well as massacres and downright murders. Observe here, That the just may be condemned and killed: but then again observe, that when such do suffer, and, without resistance, yield to the unjust sentence of oppressors, that this is marked by God to the honour of the sufferers and the infamy of their persecutors; this commonly shews that judgments are at the door, and we may certainly conclude, that a reckoning day will come, to reward the patience of the oppressed, and to break to pieces the oppressor. Thus far the address to sinners goes.

II. We have next subjoined an address to saints: some have been ready to despise or to condemn this way of preaching, when ministers, in their application, have brought a word to sinners, and a word to saints; but, from the apostle's here taking this method, we may conclude, that this is the best way rightly to divide the word of truth: From what has been said concerning wicked and oppressing rich men, occasion is given to administer comfort to God's afflicted people: Be patient therefore, since God will send such miseries on the wicked, you may see what is your duty, and where your greatest encouragement lies.

(1.) Attend to your duty; be patient, ver. 7. *Stablish your hearts*, ver. 8. *grudge not one against another, brethren*, ver. 9. Consider well the meaning of these three expressions: 1. *Be patient*; bear your afflictions without murmuring, your injuries without revenge: and though God should not in any signal manner appear for you immediately, wait for him. *The vision is for an appointed time, at the end it will speak, and will not lie; therefore wait for it: It is but a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Let your patience be lengthened out to long-sufferings, as the word here used, *μακροθυμία*, signifies. *When we have done our work, we have need of patience to stay for our reward.* This Christian patience is not a mere yielding to necessity, as the moral patience taught by some philosophers was; but it is an humble acquiescing in the wisdom and will of God, with an eye to a future glorious recompence. Be patient to the coming of the Lord. And because this is a lesson Christians must learn, though never so hard or difficult to them, it is repeated in ver. 8. *Be ye also patient*. 2. *Stablish your hearts*; let your faith be firm, without wavering; your practice of what is good, constant and continued, without tiring; and your resolutions for God and heaven fixed, in spite of all sufferings or temptations. The prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous have in all ages been a very great trial to the faith of the people of God: David tells us, *that his feet were almost gone, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked*, Psalm lxxiii. 2. And some of those Christians to whom St. James wrote, might probably be in the same tottering condition; and therefore they are called upon to *establish their hearts*; faith and patience will establish the heart. 3. *Grudge not one against another*; the words signify *groan not one against another, nor swallow*; that is, do not make one another uneasy by your murmuring groans at what befalls you; or by your distrustful groans, as to what may farther come upon you; or by your revengeful groans against the instruments of your sufferings; or by your envious groans at those who may be free

free from your calamities: Do not make yourselves uneasy, and make one another uneasy by this groaning to and grieving one another. "The apostle seemeth to me (says Dr. Manton) to be here taxing those mutual injuries and animosities, wherewith the Christians of those times having banded under the names of circumcision and uncircumcision, did grieve one another, and give each other cause to groan; so that they did not only sigh under the oppression of the rich persecutors, but under the injuries which they sustained from many of the brethren who, together with them, did profess the holy faith." Those who are in the midst of common enemies, and in any suffering circumstances, should be more especially careful not to grieve or to groan against one another, or otherwise judgments will come upon them as well as others; and the more such grudgings prevail, the nearer do they shew judgment to be.

(2.) Consider what encouragement here is for Christians to be patient, to stablish their hearts, and not to grudge one against another: And, 1. Look to the example of the husbandman; he waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. When you sow your corn in the ground, you wait many months for the former and latter rain, and are willing to stay till harvest for the fruit of your labour: and shall not this teach you to bear a few storms, and to be patient for a season, when you are looking for a kingdom and everlasting felicity? Consider him that waits for a crop of corn, and will not you wait for a crown of glory? If you should be called to wait a little longer than the husbandman does, is it not something proportionably greater, and infinitely more worth your waiting for? But, 2. Think how short your waiting time may possibly be, ver. 8. *The coming of the Lord draweth nigh*; and ver. 9. *Behold the judge standeth before the door*: Do not be impatient, do not quarrel with one another; the great judge who will set all to rights, who will punish the wicked and reward the good, is at hand: He should be conceived by you to stand as near as one that is just knocking at the door. The coming of the Lord to punish the wicked Jews, was then very nigh, when St. James writ this epistle; and whosoever the patience and other graces of his people are tried in an extraordinary manner, the certainty of Christ's coming as judge, and the nearness of it, should establish their hearts: The judge is now a great deal nearer, in his coming to judge the world, than when this epistle was written; nearer by above seventeen hundred years; and therefore this should have the greater effect upon us. 3. The danger of our being condemned when the judge appears, should excite us to mind our duty as before laid down: *grudge not lest ye be condemned*: Fretfulness and discontent expose us to the just judgment of God, and we bring more calamities upon ourselves by our murmuring, distrustful, envious groans and grudgings against one another, than we are aware of: If we avoid these evils, and be patient, under our trials, God will not condemn us: Let us encourage ourselves with this. 4. We are encouraged to be patient, by the example of the prophets, ver. 10. *Take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience*. Observe here, That the prophets, on whom God put the greatest honour, and for whom he had the greatest favour, yet were most afflicted: And when we think that the best men have had the hardest usage in this world, we should hereby be reconciled to affliction. Observe farther, that those who were the greatest examples of suffering affliction, are also the best and greatest examples of patience: Tribulation worketh patience. Hereupon St. James gives it us as the common sense of the faithful, ver. 14. *We count them happy which endure*. We look upon righteous and patient sufferers as the happiest people: See chap. i. 2—12. 5. Job also is proposed as an example for the encouragement of the afflicted, ver. 11. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, &c.* In the case of Job you have an instance of a variety of miseries, and of such as were very grievous: but under all he could bless God, and as to the general bent of his spirit, he was patient and humble; and what came to him in the end? Why truly God accomplished and brought about those things for him, that plainly prove the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. The best way to bear afflictions is to look to the end of them; and the pity of God is such, that he will not delay the bringing them to an end, when his purposes are once answered; and the tender mercy of God is such that he will make his people an abundant amends for all their sufferings and afflictions; his bowels are moving for them whilst suffering, his bounty is manifested afterward; let us serve our God, and endure our trials, as those that believe the end will crown all.

12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. 13. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. 19. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20. Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins:

This epistle now drawing to a close, the penman goes off very quick from one thing to another; hence it is that matters so very different are insisted on in these few verses.

I. The sin of swearing is cautioned against, ver. 12. *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, &c.* Some understand this too strictly, as if the meaning was, *swear not at your persecutors, at those that reproach you, and say all manner of evil of you*; be not put into a passion by the injuries they do you, so as in your passion to be provoked to swear; this swearing is no doubt forbidden here: and it will not excuse those that are guilty of this sin, to say, they swear only when they are provoked to it, and before they are aware: But the apostle's warning extends to other occasions of swearing, as well as this; some have translated the words *καὶ ὀρκίζον*, before all things, and so have made the sense of this place to be, that they should not

in common conversation, before any thing they say, put an oath; All customary needless swearing is undoubtedly forbidden, and all along in scripture condemned, as a very grievous sin: Profane swearing was very customary among the Jews, and since this epistle is directed in general to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (as before has been observed) we may conceive this exhortation sent to those who believed not: It is hard to suppose that swearing should be one of the sports of God's children, since Peter, when he was charged with being a disciple of Christ, and would disapprove the charge, cursed and swore, thereby thinking most effectually to convince them, that he was no disciple of Jesus, it being well known of such, that they durst not allow themselves in swearing; but possibly some of the looser sort of them that were called Christians might, amongst other sins here charged upon them, be guilty also of this: and it is a sin that in latter years has most scandalously prevailed, even amongst those that would be thought above all others intitled to the Christian name and privileges: It is very rare indeed to hear of a dissenter from the church of England who is guilty of swearing, but amongst those who glory in their being of the established church nothing more common: and indeed the most execrable oaths and curses now daily wound the ears and hearts of all serious Christians. St. James here said, *above all things swear not*; but how many are there that mind this the least of all things? and that make light of nothing so much as common profane swearing? But why *above all things* is swearing here forbidden? because it strikes most deeply at the honour of God, and most expressly throws contempt upon his name and authority; because this sin has, of all others, the least temptation to it: it is neither gain nor pleasure, nor reputation, that can move men to it, but a wantonness in sinning, and a needless shewing an enmity to God; *Thine enemies take thy name in vain*, Psalm cxxxix. 20. This is a proof of men being enemies to God, however they may pretend to call themselves by his name, or sometimes to compliment him in acts of worship. Because it is a sin that is most hardly left off when once men are accustomed to it, therefore it should above all others be watched against. And once more, *above all things, swear not*; for how can you expect the name of God should be a strong tower to you in your distress, if you profane it and play with it at other times?

But (as Mr. Baxter observes) "all this is so far from forbidding necessary oaths, that it is but to confirm them, by preserving the due reverence of them." And then he further notes, "That the true nature of an oath, is by our speech, to pawn the reputation of some certain or great thing, for the averring of a doubted lesser thing; and not (as is commonly held) an appeal to God, or other judge." Hence it was that swearing by the heavens, and by the earth, and by the other oaths the apostle refers to, came to be in use. The Jews thought if they did but admit the great oath of *Chi-Eluah*, they were safe. But they grew so profane as to swear by the creature, as if it was God; and so advanced it into the place of God; while on the other hand, they that swear commonly and profanely by the name of God, do hereby put him upon a level with every common thing.

But let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, lest you fall into condemnation. That is, let it suffice you to affirm or deny a thing as there is occasion; and be sure to stand to your word, and to be true to it, so as to give no occasion for your being suspected of falsehood; and then you will be kept from the condemnation of backing what you say or promise by rash oaths, and from profaning the name of God to justify yourselves. It is being suspected of falsehood that leads men to swearing: Let it be known that you keep to truth, and are firm to your word, and by this means you will find there is no need to swear to what you say. Thus shall you escape the condemnation which is expressly annexed to the third commandment, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*.

II. As Christians, we are taught to suit ourselves to the dispensation of providence, ver. 13. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms*. Our condition in this world is various; and our wisdom is to submit to its being so, and to carry it as becomes us, both in prosperity and under affliction. Sometimes we are in sadness, sometimes in mirth; God has set these one over against the other, that we may the better observe the several duties he enjoins; and that the impression made on our passions and affections may be rendered serviceable to our devotions. Afflictions should put us upon prayer; and prosperity should make us abound in praise. Not that prayer is to be confined to a time of trouble, or singing to a time of mirth; but these several duties may be performed with special advantage, and to the happiest purposes at such seasons.

1. In a day of affliction nothing more seasonable than prayer. The person afflicted must pray himself, as well as engage the prayers of others for him. Times of affliction should be praying times. To this end God sends afflictions, that we may be engaged to seek him early; and that those, who at other times, have neglected him, may be brought to inquire after him. The spirit is then most humble, the heart is broken and tender; and prayer is most acceptable to God when it comes from a contrite, humble spirit. Afflictions naturally draw out complaints, and to whom should we complain but to God in prayer? It is necessary to exercise faith and hope under afflictions; and prayer is the appointed means both for obtaining and increasing these graces in us. *If any is afflicted, let him pray*.

2. In a day of mirth and prosperity, singing psalms is very proper and seasonable. In the original it is only said, sing *ψαλλόντες*, without the addition of psalms, or any other word: And we learn from the writings of several in the first ages of Christianity (particularly from a letter of Pliny's: and from some passages in Justin Martyr and Tertullian) that the Christians were used to sing hymns, either taken out of scripture, or of more private composition, in their worship of God. Though some have thought, that St. Paul's advising both the Colossians and Ephesians to *speak to one another ψαλμοὶ καὶ ὕμνοι καὶ ὁδοὶ πνευματικαί*, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, means only the compositions of scripture; the psalms of David being distinguished in Hebrew by *Shurim*, *Tehilim*, and *Mizmorim*, words that exactly answer these of the apostle. Let that be as it will, this however we are sure of, that singing psalms is a gospel ordinance, and that our joy should be holy joy, consecrated to God. Singing is so directed to here, as to shew that if any be in circumstances of mirth and prosperity, he should turn his mirth, though alone, and by himself, into this channel. Holy mirth becomes families and retirements, as well as public assemblies. Let our singing be such as to make melody with our hearts unto the Lord, and no doubt but God will be pleased with this kind of devotion.

III. We have particular directions given as to sick persons; and healing, pardoning mercy promised, upon the observance of these directions, ver. 14, 15. *If any be sick, they are required, 1. To send for the elders ἐπισκοπῆς τῆς ἐκκλησίας*, the presbyters, pastors, or ministers of the church. It lies upon sick people as a duty to send for ministers, and to desire their assistance and their prayers. 2. It is the duty of ministers to pray over the sick, when thus desired and called for. *Let them pray over him*; let their prayers be suited to his case, and their intercessions be as becomes those that are affected with his calamities. 3. In the times of miraculous healing, the sick was to be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord. Expositors generally confine this anointing with oil to such as had the power of working miracles; and when miracles ceased, this institution ceased also. In St. Mark's gospel, we read of the apostles anointing with oil many that were sick, and healing

healing them, Mark vi. 13. And we have accounts of this being practised in the church two hundred years after Christ; but then the gift of healing also accompanied it. And when that miraculous gift ceased, this rite was laid aside. The papists indeed have made a sacrament of this, which they call the extreme unction. They use it not to heal the sick, as it was used by the apostles; but as they generally run counter to scripture, in the appointments of their church; so here they ordain, that this should be only administered to such as are at the very point of death. The apostle's anointing was in order to heal the disease; the papist's anointing is, for the expulsion of the relics of sin, and to enable the soul (as they pretend) the better to combat with the powers of the air. When they cannot prove by any visible effects, that Christ owns them in the continuance of this rite, they would however have people to believe that the invisible effects are very wonderful: But it is surely much better to omit this *anointing with oil*, than to turn it quite contrary to the purposes spoken of in scripture. Some protestants have thought that this anointing was only permitted or approved by Christ, not instituted. But it should seem by the words of St. James here, that it was a thing enjoined in cases where there was faith for healing. And some protestants have argued for it with this view. It was not to be commonly used, not even in the apostolical age; and some have thought that it should not be wholly laid aside in any age: But where there are extraordinary measures of faith in the person anointing, and in those that are anointed, there may an extraordinary blessing attend the observance of this direction for the sick. However that be, there is one thing carefully to be observed here, that the saving of the sick is not ascribed to the *anointing with oil*, but to prayer, ver. 15. *The prayer of faith shall save the sick, &c.* So that, 4. *Prayer over the sick must proceed from, and be accompanied with a lively faith.* There must be faith both in the person praying, and the person prayed for. In a time of sickness, it is not the cold and formal prayer that is effectual, but the prayer of faith. 5. *We should observe the success of prayer. The Lord shall raise up, that is, if he be a person capable and fit for deliverance, and if God has any thing farther for such a person to do in the world. And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* That is, where sickness is sent as a punishment for some particular sin, that sin shall be pardoned; and in token thereof sickness shall be removed. As when Christ said to the impotent man, *Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*; it is intimated that some particular sin was the cause of his sickness. The great thing therefore we should beg of God for ourselves and others in the time of sickness, is the pardon of sin. Sin is both the root of sickness and the sting of it. If sin be pardoned, either affliction shall be removed in mercy, or we shall see there is mercy in the continuance of it. When healing is founded upon pardon, we may say as Hezekiah did; thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, Isa. xxxviii. 17. When you are sick and in pain, it is most common to pray and cry, *O give me ease! O restore me to health!* But your prayer should rather and chiefly be, *O that God would pardon my sins!*

IV. Christians are directed to *confess their faults one to another, and so to join in their prayers with and for one another*, ver. 16. Some expositors connect this ver. 16, with ver. 14. As if when sick people send for ministers, to pray over them, they should then confess their faults to them. Indeed, where any are conscious that their sickness is a vindictive punishment of some particular sin, and they cannot look for the removal of their sickness without particular applications to God for the pardon of such a sin, there it may be proper to acknowledge and tell his case, that those who pray over him may know how to plead rightly for him: But the confession here required is, that of *Christians one to another*; and not, as the papists would have it, to a priest. Where persons have injured one another, acts of injustice must be confessed to *those against whom* they have been committed. Where persons have tempted one another to sin, or have contended in the same evil actions, there they ought mutually to blame themselves, and excite each other to repentance. Where crimes are of a public nature, and have done any public mischief, there they ought to be more publicly confessed, so as may best reach to all that are concerned. And sometimes it may be well to confess our faults to some prudent minister or praying friend, that they may help us to plead with God for mercy and pardon. But then we are not to think St. James puts us upon telling every thing that we are conscious is amiss in ourselves, or in one another: But so far as confession is necessary to our reconciliation with such as are at variance with us, or for reparation of wrongs done to any, or for the gaining information in any point of conscience, and making our own spirits quiet and easy; so far we should be ready to confess our faults. And sometimes also it may be of good use to Christians to disclose their peculiar weaknesses and infirmities to one another, where there are great intimacies and friendships; and where they may help each other by their prayers to obtain pardon of their sins, and power against them. Those who make confession of their faults one to another, should thereupon pray with and for one another, ver. 13. directs persons to pray for themselves: *Is any afflicted, let him pray*, ver. 14. directs to seek for the prayers of ministers; and ver. 16. directs private Christians to pray one for another; so that here we have all sorts of prayer, (ministerial, social, and secret) directed to.

V. The great advantage and efficacy of prayer is declared and proved. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, whether he pray for himself or for others: Witness the example of Elias, ver. 17, 18. He that prays must be a righteous man, not righteous in an absolute sense; for this Elias was not, who is here made a pattern to us; but righteous in a gospel sense; not loving or approving of any known iniquity. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer*, Psalm lxxvi. 18. Farther, the prayer itself must be a fervent, in-wrought, well-wrought prayer. It must be a pouring out the heart to God; and it must proceed from a faith

unfeigned. Such prayer avails much. It is of great advantage to ourselves, it may be very beneficial to our friends, and we are assured of its being acceptable to God. It is good having those for friends, whose prayers are available in the sight of God.

The power of prayer is here proved from the success of Elijah. And this may be encouraging to us even in common cases, if we consider that Elijah was a man of like passions with us. He was a zealous good man, and a very great man, but he had his infirmities, and was subject to disorder in his passions, as well as others. In prayer we must not look to the merit of man, but to the grace of God. Only in this we should copy after Elijah, that he prayed earnestly, or as it is in the original, *in prayer he prayed*. It is not enough to say a prayer, but we must pray in prayer. Our thoughts must be fixed, our desires firm and ardent, and our graces in exercise; and when we thus pray in prayer we shall speed in prayer. *Elijah pleaded that it might rain*; and God heard him in his pleading against an idolatrous persecuting country, so that *it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months: Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, &c.* Thus you see prayer is the key which opens and shuts heaven. To this there is an allusion, Rev. xi. 6. where the two witnesses are said to have power to shut heaven, that it rain not. This instance of the extraordinary efficacy of prayer is recorded for encouragement even to ordinary Christians to be instant and earnest in prayer. God never says to any of the seed of Jacob, *seek my face in vain*. If Elijah by prayer could do such great and wonderful things, surely the prayers of no righteous man shall return void. Where there may not be so much of miracle in God's answering our prayers, yet there may be as much of grace.

VI. This epistle concludes with an exhortation to do all we can in our places to further and promote the conversion and salvation of others, ver. 19, 20. Some interpret these verses as an apology which the apostle is making for himself, that he should so plainly and sharply reprove the Jewish Christians for their many faults and errors. And certainly St. James gives a very good reason why he was so much concerned to reclaim them from their errors; because in thus doing he should save souls, and *hide a multitude of sins*. But we are not to restrain this place to the apostle's converting such as erred from the truth; no, nor to other ministerial endeavours of the like nature; since it is said, if any err, and one convert him, let him be who he will that does so good an office for another, he is therein an instrument of *saving a soul from death*. Those whom the apostle here calls brethren, he yet supposes liable to err. It is no mark of a wife or holy man, to boast of his being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge when he is in an error. But if any do err, be they never so great, you must not be afraid to shew them their error; and be they never so weak and little, you must not disdain to make them wiser and better. If they err from the truth, that is, from the gospel, the great rule and standard of truth, whether it be in opinion or practice, you must endeavour to bring them again to the rule. Errors in judgment and in life generally go together. There is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical miscarriage. There is none habitually bad, but it is upon some bad principle. Now to convert such, is to reduce them from their error, and to reclaim them from the evils they have been led into. We are not presently to accuse and exclaim against an erring brother, and seek to bring reproaches and calamities upon him, but to convert him: And if by all our endeavours we cannot do this, yet we are no where empowered to persecute and destroy him. If we are instrumental in the conversion of any, we are said to convert them, though this be principally and efficiently the work of God. And if we can do no more towards the conversion of sinners, yet we may do this; pray for the grace and Spirit of God to convert and change them. And let those that are any way serviceable to convert others, know what will be the happy consequences of their doing this: They may take great comfort in at present, and they will meet with a crown at last.

He that is said to err from the truth in ver. 19. is described as erring in his way in ver. 20. and we cannot be said to convert any, merely by altering their opinions, unless we can bring them to correct and amend their ways. This is conversion, to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and not to turn him from one party to another, or merely from one notion and way of thinking to another. He that thus converteth a sinner from the error of his way, *shall save a soul from death*. There is a soul in the case, and what is done towards the salvation of that, shall certainly turn to good account. The soul being the principal part of the man, the saving of that only is mentioned, but it includes the salvation of the whole man: the spirit shall be saved from hell, and the body raised from the grave, and both saved from eternal death. And then, by such conversion of heart and life, *a multitude of sins shall be hid*. A most comfortable passage of scripture this is. We learn from hence, that though our sins are many, even a multitude, yet they may be hid and pardoned. That when sin is turned from or forsaken, it shall be hid, never to appear in judgment against us: And let people contrive to cover or excuse their sin as they will, there is no way effectually and finally to hide it, but forsaking it. Some make the sense of this text to be, that conversion shall prevent a multitude of sins; and that is a truth beyond dispute, that many sins are prevented in the party converted; many also may be prevented in others that he may have an influence upon, or may converse with. Upon the whole, how should we lay out ourselves with all possible concern for the conversion of sinners? It will be for the happiness and salvation of the converted; it will prevent much mischief, and the spreading and multiplying of sin in the world; it will be for the glory and honour of God; and it will mightily redound to our comfort and renown in the great day. *They that turn many to righteousness, and they that help to do so, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*

THE END OF THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE OF

P E T E R.

By Mr. J. Marist.

TWO epistles we have enrolled in the sacred canon of the Scripture, written by Peter, who was a most eminent apostle of Jesus Christ; and whose character shines bright, as it is described in the four gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles; but as it is painted by the papists and legendary writers, it represents a person of extravagant pride and ambition.

It is certain from Scripture, that Simon Peter was one of the first of those whom our Lord called to be his disciples and followers. That he was a person of excellent endowments, both natural and gracious, of great parts, and ready elocution, quick to apprehend, and bold to execute whatever he knew to be his duty. When our Saviour called his apostles, and gave them their commission, he nominated him first in the list, and by his behaviour towards him seems to distinguish him as a special favourite among the twelve. Many instances of our Lord's affection to him, both during his life, and after his resurrection, are upon record.

But there are many things confidently affirmed of this holy man that are directly false: as, That he had a primacy and superior power over the rest of the apostles; that he was more than their equal; that he was their prince, monarch, and sovereign; and that he exercised a jurisdiction over the whole college of the apostles: Moreover, That he was the sole universal pastor over all the Christian world, the only vicar of Christ upon earth; and that he was for above twenty years bishop of Rome; and that the Popes of Rome succeed to St. Peter, and derive from him an universal supremacy and jurisdiction over all churches and Christians upon earth; and that all this was by our Lord's ordering and appointment. Whereas Christ never gave him any pre-eminence of this kind, but positively forbid it, and gave precepts to the contrary. The other apostles never consented to any such claim: Paul declares himself *not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles*, 2 Cor. xi. 5, and chap. xii. 11. *In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles*. Here is no exception of St. Peter's superior dignity, whom St. Paul took the freedom to blame, and *withstood him to the face*, Gal. ii. 11. And Peter himself never assumed any thing like it, but modestly styles himself an *apostle of Jesus Christ*; and when he writes to the presbyters of the church, he humbly placeth himself in the same rank with them: *The elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an elder*, chap. v. 1. See Dr. Barrow on the Pope's supremacy.

The design of this first epistle is, 1. To explain more fully the doctrines of Christianity to these newly converted Jews. 2. To direct and persuade them to an holy conversation, in the faithful discharge of all personal and relative duties, whereby they would secure their own peace, and effectually confute the slanders and reproaches of their enemies. 3. To prepare them for sufferings: This seems to be his principal intention; for he hath something to this purpose in every chapter, and doth, by a great variety of arguments, encourage them to patience and perseverance in the faith, lest the persecutions and sad calamities that were coming upon them should prevail with them to apostatize from Christ and the gospel.

It is remarkable, that you find not so much as one word savouring of the spirit and pride of a pope in either of these epistles.

C H A P. I.

In which the apostle describes the persons to whom he writes, and salutes them, ver. 1, 2. Blesseth God for their regeneration to a lively hope of eternal salvation, ver. 3, 4, 5. In the hopes of which salvation he shews they had great cause of rejoicing, though for a little while they were in heaviness and affliction for the trial of their faith, which would produce joy unspeakable and full of glory, ver. 6—9. This is that salvation which the ancient prophets foretold, and the angels desired to look into, ver. 10, 11, 12. He exhorteth them to sobriety and holiness, which he prepresseth from the consideration of the blood of Jesus the invaluable price of man's redemption, ver. 13—20. And to brotherly love, from the consideration of their regeneration, and the excellency of their spiritual state, ver. 21—25.

1. **PETER**, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.

In this inscription we have three parts. 1. The author of it described. 1. By his name, Peter. His first name was Simon, and Jesus Christ gave him the surname of Peter, which signifies a rock, as a commendation of his faith, and to denote that he should be an eminent pillar in the church of God, Gal. ii. 9. By his office, an *apostle of Jesus Christ*. The word signifies one sent, a legate, a messenger, any one sent in Christ's name, and about his work; but more strictly it signifies the highest office in the Christian church, 1. Cor. xii. 28. *God hath set some in the church, first apostles*. Their dignity and pre-eminence lay in these things. They were immediately chosen by Christ himself; they were first witnesses, then preachers of the resurrection of Christ, and so of the entire gospel dispensation; their gifts were excellent and extraordinary; they had a power of working miracles, not at all times, but when Christ pleased; they were led into all truth, and were endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and they had an extent of power and jurisdiction beyond all others; every apostle was an universal bishop in all churches, and over all ministers. In this humble manner Peter does, 1. Assert his own character as an apostle. Hence learn, That a man may lawfully acknowledge, and sometimes is bound to assert, the gifts and graces of God to him. To pretend to what we have not, is hypocrisy; and to deny what we have, is ingratitude. 2. He mentions his apostolical function as his warrant and call to write this epistle to these people. Learn, It concerns all, but especially ministers, to consider well their warrant and call from God to their work. This will justify them to others, and give them inward support and comfort under all dangers and discouragements.

2. We have here the persons to whom this epistle was addressed, and they are described, 1. By their external condition. Strangers dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c. They were chiefly Jews, descended (as Dr. Prideaux thinks) from those Jews that were transplanted from Babylon by order of Antiochus, king of Syria, about two hundred years before the coming of Christ, and placed in the cities of Lesser Asia. It is very likely that our apostle had been among them, and converted them, being the apostle of the circumcision, and afterwards writes this epistle to them from Babylon, where multitudes of the Jewish nation then resided. At present their circumstances were poor and afflicted. Learn, 1. The best of God's servants may, through the hardships of times and providences, be dispersed about, and forced to leave their native countries. Those of whom the world was not worthy, have been forced to wander in mountains, in dens, and caves of the earth. 2. We ought to have a special regard to the dispersed persecuted servants of God. These were the objects of this apostle's particular care and compassion. We should proportion our regard to the excellency and to the necessity of the saints. 3. The value of good people ought not to be estimated by their external present condition. Here were a set of excellent people, beloved of God, and yet strangers, dispersed and poor in the world; the eye of God was upon them in all their dispersions, and the apostle was tenderly careful to write to them for their direction and consolation.

2. They are described by their spiritual condition: *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, &c.* These poor strangers that were oppressed and despised in the world, were nevertheless in high esteem with the great God, and in the most honourable state that any person can be in during this life; for they were,

1. *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*: Election is either to an office, and so Saul was the man whom the Lord chose to be king, 1. Sam. x. 24. And our Lord tells his apostles, *have not I chosen you twelve?* John vi. 70. Or to a church state, for the enjoyment of special privileges. And thus Israel was God's elect, Deut. vii. 6. *For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth.* Or to eternal salvation. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. This is the election here spoken of, importing God's gracious decree or resolution to save some and bring them, through Christ, by proper means to eternal life.

This election is said to be according to the foreknowledge of God. Foreknowledge may be taken two ways. 1. For mere prescience, foresight, or understanding; that such a thing will be before it comes to pass. Thus a mathematician certainly foreknows that such a time there will be an eclipse. This sort of foreknowledge is in God, who at one commanding view sees all things that ever were, or are, or ever will be. But such a prescience is not the cause why any thing is so or so, though in the event it certainly will be so, as the mathematician that foresees an eclipse, does not thereby cause that eclipse to be. 2. Foreknowledge sometimes signifieth counsel, appointment, and approbation, Acts ii. 23. *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. The death of Christ was not only foreseen but fore-ordained, as ver. 20. Take it thus here, so the sense is elect according to the counsel, ordination, and free grace of God.

It is added, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. By the Father we are here to understand the first person of the blessed Trinity. There is an order among the three persons, though no superiority; they are equal in power and glory, and there is an agreed oeconomy in their works. Thus in the affair of man's redemption election is by way of eminency ascribed to the Father, as reconciliation is to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Ghost; though in each of these one person is not so entirely interested, as to exclude the other two. Hereby the persons of the Trinity are more clearly discovered to us, and we are taught what obligations we are under to each of them distinctly.

2. *They were elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*. The end and last result of election is eternal life and salvation; but before that can be accomplished, every elect person must be sanctified by the Spirit, and justified by the blood of Jesus.

God's decree for man's salvation always operates through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

By sanctification here understand not a federal sanctification only, but a real one, begun in regeneration, whereby we are renewed after the image of God, and become new creatures, and carried on in the daily exercise of holiness, mortifying our sins more and more, and living to God in all the duties of a Christian life, which is here summed up in one word, obedience, comprehending all the duties of Christianity.

By the Spirit some would have the apostle to mean the spirit of man, the subject sanctified. The legal or typical sanctification did operate no farther than the purifying of the flesh; but the Christian dispensation takes effect upon the spirit of man, and purifies that. Others with better reason, think that by Spirit is meant the Holy Ghost, the author of sanctification. He renews the mind, mortifies our sins, *Rom. viii. 13.* and produces his excellent fruits in the hearts of Christians, *Gal. v. 22, 23.* This sanctification of the Spirit implies the use of means; *sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth, John xvii. 17.*

Unto obedience: This word, as it is pointed in our translation, is referred to what goes before it, and denotes the end of sanctification, which is to bring rebellious sinners to obedience again, to universal obedience, to obey the truth and gospel of Christ, *ver. 22. You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.*

2. They were elected to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. They were designed by God's decree to be sanctified by the Spirit, and to be purified by the merit and blood of Christ. Here is a manifest allusion to the typical sprinklings of blood under the law, which language these Jewish converts understood very well. The blood of the sacrifices must not only be shed but sprinkled, to denote the benefits designed thereby are applied and imputed to the offerers. Thus the blood of Christ, the grand and all-sufficient sacrifice, typified by the legal sacrifices, was not only shed, but must be sprinkled and communicated to everyone of these elect Christians, *that through faith in his blood they may obtain remission of sins, Rom. iii. 25.* This blood of sprinkling justifies before God, *Rom. v. 9.* seals the covenant between God and us, of which the Lord's Supper is a sign, *Luke xxii. 20.* cleanseth from all sin, *1 John i. 7.* and admits us into heaven, *Heb. x. 19.*

Note, 1. That God hath elected some to eternal life, some, not at all; persons, not qualifications. 2. All that are chosen to eternal life as the end, are chosen to obedience as the way. 3. Unless a person be sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, there will be no true obedience in the life. 4. There is a consent and co-operation of all the persons of the Trinity in the affair of man's salvation, and their acts are commensurate one to another; whoever the Father does elect, the Spirit does sanctify unto obedience, and the Son does redeem and sprinkle with his blood. 5. The doctrine of the Trinity does lie at the foundation of all revealed religion. If you deny the proper deity of the Son and Holy Spirit, you invalidate the redemption of the one, and the gracious operations of the other, and by that means destroy the foundation of your own safety and comfort.

3. The salutation follows, *Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.* The blessings desired for them are *grace and peace.*

1. *Grace;* the free favour of God, with all its proper effects, pardoning, healing, assisting, and saving. 2. *Peace;* all sorts of peace may be here intended, domestic, civil, ecclesiastical peace in the church, and spiritual peace with God, and the feeling of it in our own consciences.

2. Here is the request of prayer, in relation to these blessings, that they may be multiplied; which implies, that they were already possessed in some degree of these blessings, and he wishes them the continuation, the increase, and the perfection of them. Learn,

1. That they possess spiritual blessings in their own souls, do earnestly desire the communication of the same to others; the grace of God is a generous, not a selfish principle.

2. The best blessings we can desire for ourselves, or one for another, are *grace and peace*, with the multiplication of them; therefore the apostles so often make this their prayer in the beginning and end of their epistles.

3. Solid peace cannot be enjoyed where there is no true grace; first grace, then peace; Peace without grace is mere stupidity; but grace may be true, where there is for a time no actual peace; as Heman was distracted with terror, and Christ was once in an agony.

4. The increase of grace and peace, as well as the first gift of them, is from God: where he giveth true grace, he will give more grace; and every good man does earnestly desire the improvement and multiplication of these blessings in himself and others.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We come now to the body of the epistle, which begins with a congratulation of the dignity and happiness of the state of these believers, brought in under the form of a thanksgiving to God: Other epistles begin in like manner, *2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. i. 3.* Here we have, 1. The duty performed, which is blessing God: A man blesteth God by a just acknowledgment of his excellency and blessedness. 2. Here is the object of this blessing described by his relation to Jesus Christ; *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:* Here are three names of one person, denoting his threefold office: (1.) He is Lord, an universal King or Sovereign; (2.) Jesus, a Priest or Saviour; (3.) Christ, a Prophet, anointed with the Spirit, and furnished with all gifts necessary for the instruction, conduct, and salvation of his church: *This God so blessed, is the God of Christ,* according to his human nature, and his Father, according to his divine nature.

3. You have the reasons that oblige us to this duty of blessing God, which are in general, *his abundant mercy;* all our blessings are owing to God's mercy, not to man's merit, particularly regeneration; he hath begotten us again, and this deserves our thanksgiving to God, especially if we consider the fruit it produceth in us, which is that excellent grace of hope, and that not such a vain, dead, perishing hope as that of worldlings and hypocrites, but a lively hope, a living, strong, quickening, and durable hope, as that hope must needs be that hath such a solid foundation, as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Learn,

1. That a good Christian's condition is never so bad but he hath great reason still to bless God: As a sinner hath always reason to mourn, notwithstanding his present prosperity; so good people, in the midst of their manifold difficulties, have reason still to rejoice and bless God.

2. In our prayers and praises we should address to God as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;* it is only through him that we and our services are accepted.

3. The best of men owe their best blessings to the abundant mercy of God; all the evil in the world is from man's sin, but all the good in it is from God's mercy; regeneration is expressly ascribed to the abundant mercy of

God, and so are all the rest; we subsist entirely upon divine mercy. Of the nature of regeneration, see *John iii. 3.* in volume iii.

4. Regeneration produceth a lively hope of eternal life: Every unconverted person is a hopeless creature; whatever he pretends to of that kind, is all confidence and presumption; the right Christian hope is what a man is begotten again unto by the Spirit of God; it is not from nature, but free grace; they that are begotten to a new and spiritual life, are begotten to a new and spiritual hope.

5. The hope of a Christian hath this excellency, it is a living hope; the hope of eternal life in a true Christian, is an hope that keeps him alive, quickens him, supports him, and conducts him to heaven; Hope invigorates and spirits up the soul to action, to patience, to fortitude, and perseverance to the end: The delusive hopes of the unregenerate are vain and perishing; the hypocrite and his hope expire and both die together, *Job. xxvii. 8.*

6. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is the ground or foundation of a Christian's hope; the resurrection of Christ is the act of the Father as a Judge, of the Son as a Conqueror; his resurrection demonstrates that the Father accepts his death in full discharge for our ransom, that he is victorious over death, the grave, and all our spiritual enemies; and it is also an assurance of our own resurrection, there being an inseparable union between Christ and his flock; they rise by virtue of his resurrection as an head, rather than by virtue of his power as a judge: *We are risen with Christ, Col. iii. 1.* From all this taken together, Christians have two fast solid foundations whereon to build their hope of eternal life.

4. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

The apostle continues his thanksgiving to God, and having congratulated these people on their new birth, and their hope of everlasting life, he goes on to describe that life under the notion of an inheritance; a most proper way of speaking to these people; for,

1. They were poor and persecuted, perhaps turned out of their inheritance to which they were born; to allay this grievance, he tells them they were new-born to a new inheritance, infinitely better than what they had lost.

2. They were Jews most of them, and so had a mighty affection to the land of Canaan as the land of their inheritance, settled upon them by God himself; and to be driven out from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, was looked upon as a sore judgment, *1 Sam. xxvi. 19.* to comfort them under this they are put in mind of a noble inheritance reserved in heaven for them, such an one as the land of Canaan was but a mere shadow in comparison of it.

Note, 1. That heaven is the undoubted inheritance of all the children of God, all that are born again are born to an inheritance, as man makes his child his heir; the apostle argues, *if children, then heirs, Rom. viii. 17.* God giveth his gifts unto all, but the inheritance to none but his children; those that are his sons and daughters by regeneration and adoption, receive the promise of eternal inheritance, *Heb. ix. 15.* This inheritance is not our purchase, but our Father's gift; not wages that we merit, but the effect of grace, which first makes us children, and then settles this inheritance upon us by a firm unalterable covenant.

Note, 2. The incomparable excellencies of this inheritance, which are four.

1. It is incorruptible: in which respect it is like its maker, who is called the incorruptible God, *Rom. i. 23.* all corruption is a change from better to worse, but heaven is without change, and without end; the house is eternal in the heavens, and the possessors must subsist for ever; *for their corruptible must put on incorruption, 1 Cor. xv. 23.*

2. This inheritance is undefiled; like the great High-priest that is now in possession of it, who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, *Heb. vii. 26.* Sin and misery, the two grand defilements that spoil this world and mar its beauty, have no place there.

3. It fadeth not away, but always retains its vigour and beauty, and remains inaccessible, ever entertaining and pleasing the saints that possess it, without the least weariness or distaste.

4. Reserved in heaven for you; which expression teaches us, 1. That it is a glorious inheritance, for it is in heaven, and all that is there is glorious, *Eph. i. 18.* 2. It is certain, a reversion in another world safely kept and preserved, till we come to the possession of it. 3. The persons for whom it is reserved are described, not by their names, but by their character; *for you, or us, or every one that is begotten again to a lively hope,* this inheritance is preserved for them, and none but them, all the rest will be shut out for ever.

5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This inheritance being described as future, and distant both in time and place, the apostle supposeth some doubt or uneasiness yet to remain upon the minds of these people whether they might not possibly fall short by the way; though the happiness be safe in heaven, yet we are still upon earth, liable to abundance of temptations, miseries, and infirmities; are we in such safe state that we shall certainly come there; to this he answers, that they should be safely guarded and conducted thither; they should be kept and preserved from all such destructive temptations and injuries as would prevent their safe arrival at eternal life; the heir to an earthly estate hath no assurance that he shall live to enjoy it, but the heirs of heaven shall certainly be conducted safe to the possession of it; the blessing here promised is preservation, ye are kept; the author of it, God; the means in us made use of for that end, is our own faith and care; the end to which we are preserved, is salvation; and the time when we shall see the safe end and issue of all is the last time.

Note, 1. Such is the tender care of God over his people, that he not only gives them grace, but preserves them unto glory; their being kept, implies both danger and deliverance; they may be attacked, but shall not be overcome.

2. The preservation of the regenerate to eternal life is the effect of God's power; the greatness of the work; the number of enemies, and our own infirmities, are such as no power, but what is almighty, can preserve the soul through all unto salvation; therefore the scripture often represents man's salvation as the effect of divine power, *2 Cor. xii. 9. Rom. xiv. 4.*

3. The preservation of God's power does not supersede man's endeavour and care for his own salvation; here is God's power, and man's faith, which implies an earnest desire of salvation, a reliance upon Christ, according to his invitations and promises, a vigilant care to do every thing pleasing to God, and avoid whatever is offensive; an abhorrence of temptations, a respect to the recompence of reward, and persevering diligence in prayer; by such a patient, operating, conquering faith, we are kept, under the assistance of divine grace, unto salvation; faith is a sovereign preservative of the soul through a state of grace into a state of glory.

4. This salvation is ready to be revealed in the last times: Here are three things

things asserted about the salvation of the saints: 1. That it is now prepared, and made ready, and reserved in heaven for them. 2. Though it be made ready now, yet it is in a great measure hidden and unrevealed at present, not only to the ignorant, blind world, that never enquire after it, but even to the heirs of salvation themselves: *It does not yet appear what we shall be*, 1 John iii. 2. 3. That it shall be fully and completely revealed in the last time, or at the last day of judgment: *Life and immortality are now brought to light by the gospel*, but this life will be revealed more gloriously at death, when the soul shall be admitted into the presence of Christ, and behold his glory; and even beyond this there will be a farther and a final revelation of the amplitude and transcendence of the saints' felicity at the last day, when their bodies shall be raised, and re-united to their souls, and judgment shall pass upon angels and men, and Christ shall publicly honour and applaud his servants in the face of all the world.

6. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

The first word, *wherein*, refers to the apostle's foregoing discourse about the excellency of their present state, and their grand expectations for the future; in this condition *you greatly rejoice, though now for a season*, or a little while, *if needs be, ye are made sorrowful through manifold temptations*: The apostle grants they were in great affliction, and propounds several things in mitigation of their sorrows.

Note, 1. Every sound Christian hath always something *wherein* he may greatly rejoice; great rejoicing contains more than an inward placid serenity of mind or sensation of comfort; it will shew itself in the countenance and carriage, but especially in praise and gratitude.

2. The chief joy of a good Christian ariseth from things spiritual and heavenly, from his relation to God and to heaven; in these every sound Christian greatly rejoiceth; his joy ariseth from his treasure, which consists of matters of great value, and the title to them is sure.

3. The best Christians, those that have reason greatly to rejoice, may yet be in great heaviness through manifold temptations; all sorts of adversities are temptations, or trials of faith, patience, and constancy; these seldom go singly, but are manifold, and come from different quarters; the effect of all which is great heaviness: As men we are subject to sorrows, personal and domestic; and, as Christians, our duty to God obliges us to frequent sorrow; and our compassion towards the miserable, the dishonour done to God, the calamities of his church, and the destruction of mankind, from their own folly, and from divine vengeance, raises in a generous and pious mind, almost continual sorrow, Rom. ix. 2. *I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart*.

4. The afflictions and sorrows of good people are but for a little while, they are but for a season, though they may be smart, they are but short; life itself is but for a little while, and the sorrows of it cannot survive it; the shortness of any affliction does much abate the heaviness of it.

5. Great heaviness is often necessary to a Christian's good; *if need be, ye are in heaviness*; God does not afflict his people willingly, but acts with judgment in proportion to our needs; there is a convenience and fitness, nay, an absolute necessity in the case, for so the expression signifies, *it must be*; therefore no man should be moved by these afflictions: *for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto*, 1 Thess. iii. 3. These troubles, that lie heavy, never come upon us but when we have need, and never stay any longer than needs must.

7. That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

These words express the end of good people's afflictions, and the ground of their joy under them; the end of afflictions is *the trial of their faith*; the nature of this trial, it is *much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire*; the result and effect of the trial is this, *it will be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*.

Note, 1. That the afflictions of serious Christians are designed for the trial of their faith; God's design in afflicting his people is their probation, not their destruction; their advantage, not their ruin; a trial, as the word signifies, is an experiment of search made upon a man, by some affliction, to prove the value and strength of his faith; this trial is made upon faith principally, rather than any other grace, because the trial of that is, in effect, the trial of all that is good in us; our Christianity depends upon our faith; if that be wanting, there is nothing else that is spiritually good in us; Christ prays for this apostle, *that his faith might not fail*; if that be supported, all the rest will stand firm; the faith of good people is tried, that they themselves may have the comfort of it, God the glory of it, and others the benefit of it.

2. A tried faith is much more precious than tried gold; here is a double comparison of faith and gold, and the trial of the one with the trial of the other; gold is the most valuable, pure, useful, and durable of all the metals, so is faith among the Christian virtues; it lasts till it brings the soul to heaven, and then it issues in the glorious fruition of God for ever; the trial of faith is much more precious than the trial of gold; in both there is a purification, a separation of the dross, and a discovery of the soundness and goodness of the things; gold does not increase and multiply by trial in the fire, it rather grows less; but faith is established, improved, and multiplied, by the oppositions and afflictions that it meets with; gold must perish at last; gold that perishes, but faith never will; *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32.

3. The trial of faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory. Honour is properly that esteem and value which one hath with another, and so God and man will honour the saints; praise is the expression or declaration of that esteem; so Christ will commend his people in the great day, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, &c.*; glory is that lustre wherewith a person is honoured and praised shines in heaven; glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, Rom. ii. 10. If a tried faith be found to praise, honour, and glory, let this recommend faith to you, as much more precious than gold, though it be afflicted and tried by afflictions; if you make your estimate either from present use, or the final event of both, it will be found true; however the world takes it for an incredible paradox.

4. That Jesus Christ will appear again in glory, and when he does so, the saints will appear with him, and their graces will appear illustrious; and the more they have been tried, the more bright they will then appear; the trial will soon be over, but the glory, honour, and praise, will last to eternity: This should reconcile you to your present afflictions: *they work for you a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory*.

8. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The faith of these primitive Christians is farther commended upon two accounts: 1. The excellency of its object, the unseen Jesus; the apostle had seen our Lord in the flesh, but these dispersed Jews never did, and yet they believed in him. It is one thing to believe God, or Christ, so the devils believe, another thing to believe in him: which denotes subjection, reliance, and expectation of all promised good from him. 2. On account of two notable productions or effects of their faith, love, and joy; and this joy so great, as to be above description; *Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*.

Learn, 1. The faith of a Christian is properly conversant about things revealed, but not seen; sense converseth with things sensible and present; reason is an higher guide, and that, by sure deductions, can infer the operation of causes, and the certainty of events; but faith ascends further still, and assures us of abundance of particulars that sense and reason could never have found out, upon the credit of revelation; it is the evidence of things not seen.

2. True faith is never alone, but produces a strong love to Jesus Christ; true Christians have a dear love to Jesus, because they believe in him; this love discovers itself in the highest esteem for him, affectionate desires after him, willingness to be dissolved to be with him, delightful thoughts, cheerful services, and sufferings, &c.

3. Where there is true faith and love to Christ, there is, or may be, joy unspeakable and full of glory; this joy is inexpressible, it cannot be described by words; the best discovery is by an experimental taste of it; it is full of glory, full of heaven; there is much of heaven and the future glory in the present joys of improved Christians, their faith removes the causes of sorrow, and affords the best reasons for joy; though good people sometimes walk in darkness, it is often owing to their own mistakes and ignorance, or to a fearful, melancholy disposition, or to some late sinful miscarriage, or perhaps to some sad occurrence of providence, that sinks their comfort for the present, yet they have reason to rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation, Hab. iii. 18.

9. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Well might these Christians rejoice with joy unspeakable, since they were every day receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.

Note, 1. The blessing they were receiving, the salvation of souls; the more noble part being put for the whole man; which salvation is here called the end of their faith; the end wherein faith terminates; it helps to save the soul, then it hath done its work, and ceaseth for ever.

Note, 2. He speaks of the present time, you are now actually receiving the end of your faith, &c.

Note, 3. The word alludes to the games at which the conquerors received or bore away from the judge of the contest, a crown or reward, which he carried about in triumph: so the salvation of their soul was the prize these Christians fought for, the crown they laboured for, the end they aimed at which came nearer and more within their reach every day.

Learn, 1. That every faithful Christian is daily receiving the salvation of his soul; salvation is one permanent thing, begun in this life, not interrupted by death, and continued to all eternity; These believers had the beginnings of heaven in the possession of holiness, and an heavenly mind, in their duties and communion with God, in the earnest of the inheritance, and the witness of the divine Spirit: This was properly urged to these distressed people, they were on the losing side in the world, the apostle puts them in mind of what they were receiving; if they lost an inferior good, they were all the while receiving the salvation of their souls.

2. It is lawful for a Christian to make the salvation of his soul his end; the glory of God and our own felicity are so connected, that if we regularly seek the one we must attain the other.

10. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

The apostle having described the persons to whom he wrote, and declared to them the excellent advantages they were under, he goes on to shew them what warrant he had for what he had delivered; and, because they were Jews, and had a mighty veneration for the Old Testament, he produceth the authority of the prophets to convince them that the doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ was no new doctrine, but the same which the old prophets did enquire and search diligently into.

Note, 1. Who made this diligent search; the prophets, who were persons inspired by God to the doing or saying things extraordinary, above the reach of their own studies and abilities, foretelling things to come, and revealing the will of God, by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

2. The object of their search; which was salvation, and the grace of God which should come unto you; the general salvation of men of all nations by Jesus Christ, and more especially the salvation afforded to the Jews: the grace that should come to them from him who was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: They foresaw glorious times of light, grace, and comfort, coming upon the church, which made the prophets and righteous desire to see and hear the things which came to pass in the days of the gospel.

3. The manner of their enquiry; they enquired and searched diligently; the words are strong and emphatical, alluding to miners that dig to the bottom, and break through not only the earth, but the rock, to come to the ore; so these holy prophets had an earnest desire to know, and were proportionably diligent in their enquiries after the grace of God, which was to be revealed in the days of the Messiah; their being inspired did not make their industrious search needless; for, notwithstanding their extraordinary assistance from God, they were obliged to make use of all the ordinary methods of improvement in wisdom and knowledge: Daniel was a man greatly beloved and inspired, yet he understood by books and study the computations of time, chap. ix. 2. Even their own revelation required their study, meditation, and prayer; for many prophecies had a double meaning; in their first intention they aimed at some person or event near at hand, but their ultimate design was to describe the person, sufferings, or kingdom of Christ.

Observe, 1. The doctrine of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, hath been the study and admiration of the greatest and wisest of men; the nobleness of the subject, and their own concern in it, have engaged them, with most accurate attention and seriousness, to search into it.

2. A good man is much affected and pleased with the grace and mercy of

of God to others, as well as to himself; the prophets were highly delighted with the prospects of mercy to be shewn both to Jews and Gentiles at the coming of Christ.

3. They that would be acquainted with this great salvation, and the grace that shines therein, must enquire and search diligently into it: If it were necessary for an inspired prophet to do so, much more for persons so weak and injudicious as we are.

4. The grace that came by the gospel excels all that was before it; the gospel dispensation is more glorious, evident, intelligible, extensive, and effectual, than any dispensation that ever did precede it.

11. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

The particular matters which the ancient prophets chiefly searched into are here expressed; Jesus Christ was the main subject of their studies, and in relation to him, they were most inquisitive into, (1.) His humiliation and death, and the glorious consequences of it; the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. This inquiry would lead them into a view of the whole gospel, the sum whereof is this, that Christ Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. (2.) The time, and manners of the times, wherein the Messiah was to appear; undoubtedly these holy prophets earnestly desired to see the days of the son of man; and therefore, next to the thing itself, their minds were set upon the time of its accomplishment, so far as the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, had signified any thing toward that purpose: The nature of the times was also under their strict consideration, whether they would be quiet or troublesome times; times of peace or times of war.

Learn, 1. Jesus Christ had a being, and did exist before his incarnation; for his Spirit did then exist in the prophets, and therefore he whose that Spirit then was, must be in being also.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity was not wholly unknown to the faithful in the Old Testament; the prophets knew that they were inspired by a Spirit that was in them, this Spirit they knew to be the Spirit of Christ, and consequently distinct from Christ himself: here is a plurality of persons, and from other parts of the Old Testament a Trinity may be collected.

3. The works here ascribed to the Holy Ghost prove him to be God; he did signify, discover, and manifest to the prophets, many hundred years beforehand, the sufferings of Christ, with a multitude of particular circumstances attending them; and he did also testify, or give proof and evidence beforehand, of the certainty of that event, by inspiring the prophets to reveal it, to work miracles in confirmation of it, and by enabling the faithful to believe it; these works prove the Spirit of Christ to be God, since he is possessed of almighty power and infinite knowledge.

4. From the example of Christ Jesus, learn to expect a time of services and sufferings before you are received to glory; it was so with him, and the disciple is not above his Lord; the suffering time is but short, but the glory is everlasting; let the suffering season be never so sharp and severe, it shall not hinder, but work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The words contain an answer to the prophet's inquiry; their holy endeavours to inform themselves were not slighted, for God gives them a satisfactory revelation to quiet and comfort their minds; they were informed that these things should not come to pass in their time, but yet all was firm and certain, and should come to pass in the times of the apostles; not unto themselves, but unto us; and we must report them, under the infallible direction of the Holy Ghost, to all the world; which things the angels, &c.

You have here three sorts of students, or inquirers into the great affair of man's salvation by Jesus Christ: 1. The prophets search diligently into it. 2. The apostles, who consulted all the prophecies, and were witnesses of the accomplishment of them, and so reported what they knew to others in the preaching of the gospel. 3. The Angels, who most attentively pry into these matters.

Learn, 1. A diligent endeavour after the knowledge of Christ and our duty, will certainly be answered with good success: The prophets were answered with a revelation; Daniel studies, and receives information; the Bereans search the scriptures, and were confirmed.

2. The holiest and best of men sometimes have their lawful and pious requests denied: It was both lawful and pious for these prophets to desire to know more than they were permitted to know about the time of the appearance of Christ in the world, but they were denied: It is lawful and pious for good parents to pray for their wicked children, for the poor to pray against poverty, for a good man to pray against death, yet, in these honest requests, they often are denied: God is pleased to answer our necessities rather than our requests.

3. It is the honour and practice of a Christian to be useful to others in many cases, rather than to himself; the prophets ministered to others, not unto themselves; none of us liveth to himself, Rom. xiv. 7. Nothing more contrary to man's nature and Christian principles, than for a man to make himself his own end, and live to himself.

4. The revelations of God to his church, though gradual, and given by parcels, are all perfectly consistent; the doctrine of the prophets and of the apostles do exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God.

5. The efficacy of the evangelical ministry depends upon the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit; the success of it depends upon its operation and blessing.

6. The mysteries of the gospel, and the methods of man's salvation are so glorious; that the blessed angels do earnestly desire to look into them; they are curious, accurate, and industrious in prying into them; they consider the whole scheme of man's redemption with deep attention and admiration, particularly these points the apostle had been discoursing of; which things the angels desire to stoop down and look into, as the cherubims did continually towards the mercy seat.

13. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to them, whose glorious state he had before described, thereby instructing us, that Christianity is a doctrine according to godliness, designed not only to make us wiser, but better; wherefore, since you are so honoured and distinguished, as above,

Gird up the loins of your mind; you have a journey to go, a race to run, a warfare to accomplish, and a great work to do; as the traveller, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer gather in, and gird up their long and loose garments, that they may be more ready, prompt, and expeditious in their business; so do you by your minds, your inner man, and affections seated there; gird them, gather them in, let them not hang loose and neglected about you; restrain their extravagancies, and let the loins, or strength and vigour of your minds, be exerted in your duty; disengage yourselves from all that would hinder you, and go on resolutely in your obedience.

Be sober, be vigilant against all your spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate and modest in eating, drinking, apparel, recreation, business, and in the whole of your behaviour; be sober minded also in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves.

And hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Some refer this to the last judgment, as if the apostle did direct their hope to the final revelation of Jesus Christ; but it seems more natural to take it, as it might be rendered, hope perfectly, or thoroughly, for the grace that is brought to you, or by the revelation of Jesus Christ; that is, by the gospel which brings life and immortality to light; hope perfectly, trust without doubt to that grace which is now offered to you by the gospel.

Learn, 1. The main work of a Christian lies in the right management of his heart and mind; the apostle's first direction is to gird up the loins of the mind.

2. The best Christians have need to be exhorted to sobriety; these excellent Christians are put in mind of it; it is required of a bishop, 1. Tim. iii. 2. of aged men, Tit. ii. 2. the young women are to be taught it, and the young men are directed to be sober-minded, Tit. ii. 4, 6.

3. A Christian's work is not over as soon as he has got into a state of grace; he must still hope and strive for more grace; when he hath entered the strait gate, he must still walk in the narrow way, and gird up the loins of his mind for that purpose.

4. A strong and perfect trust in God's grace is very consistent with our best endeavours in our duty; we must hope perfectly, and yet gird up our loins, and address ourselves vigorously to the work we have to do, encouraging ourselves from the grace of Jesus Christ.

14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.

The exhortation is continued, and the words may be taken either as a rule of holy living, which is both positive, you ought to live as obedient children, and those whom God hath adopted into his family, and regenerated by his grace; and negative, you must not fashion yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance; or the words may be taken as an argument to press them to holiness from the consideration of what they now are, children of obedience, and what they were when they lived in lust and ignorance.

Learn, 1. The children of God ought to prove themselves to be such by their obedience to God, by their present, constant, universal obedience.

2. The best of God's children have had their times of lust and ignorance; the time hath been when the whole scheme of their lives, their way and fashion, was to accommodate and gratify their unlawful desires and vicious appetites, being grossly ignorant of God and themselves, of Christ and the gospel.

3. Persons converted differ exceedingly from what they were formerly; they are people of another fashion and manner from what they were before; their inward frame, behaviour, speech, and conversation, is much altered from what it was in times past.

4. The lusts and extravagancies of sinners, are both the fruits and signs of their ignorance.

15. But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: 16. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Here is a noble rule enforced by strong arguments, Be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Who is sufficient for this? and yet it is required in strong terms, and enforced by three reasons, taken from the grace of God, in calling us; from his command, it is written; and from his example, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Learn, 1. The grace of God in calling a sinner is a powerful engagement to holiness; it is a mighty favour to be called effectually by divine grace out of a state of sin and misery, into the possession of all the blessings of the new covenant; and great favours are strong obligations; it does enable as well as oblige to holiness.

2. Complete holiness is the desire and duty of every Christian; here is a twofold rule of holiness; (1.) It must, for the extent of it, be universal, must be holy, and be so in all manner of conversation; in all civil and religious affairs, in every condition, prosperous or adverse; towards all people, friends or enemies: in all our intercourse and business still we must be holy. (2.) For the pattern of it, we must be holy, as God is holy; we must imitate him, though we can never equal him; he is perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally holy; and we should aspire after such a state: The consideration of the holiness of God should oblige us to the highest degrees of holiness we can attain unto.

3. The written word of God is the surest rule of a Christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to be holy every way.

4. The Old Testament commands are to be studied and obeyed in the times of the New Testament; the apostle, by virtue of a command delivered several times by Moses, requires holiness in all Christians.

17. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

The apostle does not here express any doubt at all, whether these Christians would call upon their heavenly Father, but supposes they would certainly do it, and from that argues with them to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear: if you own the great God as a Father and a judge, you ought to live the time of your sojourning here in his fear.

Learn, 1. All good Christians look upon themselves in this world as pilgrims and sojourners, as strangers in a distant country, passing to another, in which they properly belong, Psalm xxxix. 17. Heb. xi. 13.

2. The whole time of our sojourning here is to be passed in the fear of God.

3. The consideration of God as a judge, is not improper for those that can truly call him Father; holy confidence in God as a Father, and an awful fear

fear of him as a Judge, are very consistent; to regard God as a Judge, is a singular means to endear him to us as a Father.

4. The judgment of God will be without respect to persons, according to every man's works; no external relation to him will protect any; the Jew may call God Father, and Abraham father, but God will not respect persons or favour their cause from personal considerations, but judge them according to their work; the works of men will in the great day discover their persons; God will make all the world to know who are his by their works; we are obliged to faith, holiness, and obedience, and our works will be an evidence whether we have complied with our obligations or no.

18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The apostle having exhorted to pass the time of our life in the fear of God, from this consideration, that we call on the Father; he adds, in these words, a second argument, because, or forasmuch as we are redeemed by the Son, &c. wherein he puts them in mind, 1. That they were redeemed, or brought back again, by a ransom paid to the Father. 2. What the price paid for their redemption was; not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. 3. They knew this; forasmuch as ye know, and cannot pretend ignorance of this great affair. 4. From what they were redeemed; from a vain conversation received by tradition.

Learn, 1. That the consideration of our redemption ought to be a constant and powerful inducement to holiness, and the fear of God.

2. God expects that a Christian should live answerably to what he knows, and therefore we have great need to be put in mind of what we already know, Psalm xxxix. 4.

3. Neither silver nor gold, nor any of the corruptible things of this world, can redeem so much as one soul; they are often flares, temptations, and hindrances to man's salvation, but they can by no means purchase or procure it; they are corruptible, and therefore cannot redeem an incorruptible and immortal soul.

4. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only price of man's redemption; the redemption of man is real, not metaphorical; we are bought with a price, and the price is equal to the purchase, for it is the precious blood of Christ, it is the blood of an innocent person, a lamb without blemish and without spot, whom the paschal lamb did represent, and of an infinite person, being the Son of God, and therefore is called the blood of God, Acts xxi. 28.

5. The design of Christ in shedding his most precious blood was to redeem us, not only from eternal misery hereafter, but from a vain conversation in this world. That conversation is vain, that is empty, frivolous, trifling, and unserviceable to the honour of God, the credit of religion, the conviction of unbelievers, and the comfort and satisfaction of a man's own conscience. Not only the open wickedness, but the vanity and unprofitableness of our conversation is highly dangerous.

6. It is possible a man's conversation may carry an appearance of devotion, and may plead antiquity, custom and tradition in its defence, and yet after all be a most vain conversation. The Jews had a deal to say from these heads, for all their formalities; and yet their conversation was so vain, that only the blood of Christ could redeem them from it. Antiquity is no certain rule of verity, nor is it a wise resolution, "I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so."

20. Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you; 21. Who by him believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

The Redeemer is farther described not only as a lamb without spot, but as one, 1. That was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, fore-ordained or foreknown. When preference is ascribed to God, it implies more than bare prospect or speculation. It does import an act of the will, a resolution that the thing shall be, Acts ii. 23. God did not only fore-know, but determine and decree that his Son should die for man, and this decree was before the foundation of the world. Time and the world began together: before the commencement of time there was nothing but eternity.

2. That he was manifested in these last days for you. He was manifested or demonstrated to be that redeemer whom God had fore-ordained. He was manifested by his birth, by his Father's testimony; and by his own works, especially by his resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4. This was done in these last times of the New Testament and of the gospel, for you, you Jews, you sinners, you afflicted ones, you have the comfort of the manifestation and appearance of Christ, if you believe on him.

3. That God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory. The resurrection of Christ, considered as an act of power, is common to all the three persons, but as an act of judgment is peculiar to the Father, who as a judge released Christ, and raised him from the grave, and gave him glory, proclaimed him to all the world to be his Son by his resurrection from the dead, advanced him to heaven, crowned him with glory and honour, invested him with all power in heaven and earth, and glorified him with that glory which he had with God, before the world was.

The redeemed are also described here by their faith and hope. The cause of which is Jesus Christ; you do by him believe in God. By him as the author, encourager, support and finisher of your faith; your faith and hope now may be in God, as reconciled to you by Christ the mediator.

Learn, 1. The decree of God to send Christ to be a mediator was from everlasting, and was a just and merciful decree, which yet does not at all excuse man's sin in crucifying him, Acts ii. 23. God had purposes of special favour towards his people, long before he made any manifestations of such grace unto them.

2. Grace is the happiness of the last times in comparison with what the former ages of the world did enjoy. The clearness of light, the supports of faith, the efficacy of ordinances, and the proportion of comforts; these are all much larger since the manifestation of Christ than they were before. Our gratitude and services should be suitable to such favours.

3. The redemption of Christ belongs to none but true believers. A general imputation is asserted by some, and denied by others; but none pretend to a general application of Christ's death for the salvation of all. Hypocrites and unbelievers will be ruined for ever, notwithstanding the death of Christ.

4. God in Christ is the ultimate object of a Christian's faith, which is strongly supported by the resurrection of Christ, and the glory that did follow.

22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently.

Here the apostle begins another exhortation to brotherly love, wherein he supposeth that the gospel had already such an effect upon them, as to purify their souls, while they obeyed it through the Spirit, and that it had produced at least an unfeigned love of the brethren; and from thence he argues with them to proceed to an higher degree of affection, to love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Learn, 1. It is not to be doubted but that every sincere Christian purifies his soul. The apostle takes that for granted, seeing ye have, &c. To purify the soul supposeth some great uncleanness and defilement which had polluted it, and that this defilement is removed. Neither the Levitical purifications under the law, nor the hypocritical purifications of the outward man can effect this.

2. The word of God is the great instrument of a sinner's purification. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth. The gospel is called truth, in opposition to types and shadows, and to error and falsehood. This truth is effectual to purify the soul if it be obeyed, John xvii. 17. Many hear the truth, but are never purified by it, because they will not submit to it nor obey it.

3. The Spirit of God is the great agent in the purifications of man's soul. The Spirit convinceth the soul of its impurities, furnishes those virtues and graces that do both adorn and purify, such as faith, Acts xv. 9. hope, 1 John iii. 3. the fear of God, Psalm xiv. 9. and the love of Jesus Christ. The Spirit excites our endeavours, and makes them successful. The aid of the Spirit does not supersede our own industry; these people purified their own souls, but it was through the Spirit.

4. The souls of Christians must be purified before they can so much as love one another unfeignedly. There are those lusts and partialities in man's nature, that without divine grace we can neither love God nor one another as we ought to do; there is no charity but out of a pure heart.

5. It is the duty of all Christians sincerely and fervently to love one another. Our affection to one another must be sincere and real, and it must be fervent, constant, and extensive.

23. Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.

The duty of loving one another with a pure heart fervently, the apostle does farther press upon Christians from the consideration of their spiritual reatation; they are all born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, &c. From whence we may learn,

1. That all Christians are born again. The apostle speaks of it as what is common to all serious Christians, and by this they are brought into a new and nearer relation one to another, they become brethren by their new birth.

2. The word of God is the great means of regeneration, James i. 18. The grace of regeneration is conveyed by the gospel.

3. This new and second birth is much more desirable and excellent than the first. This the apostle teaches by preferring the incorruptible to the corruptible seed. By the one we become the children of men, by the other the sons and daughters of the most High. The word of God being compared to seed, teaches us, that though it be little in appearance, yet it is wonderful in operation; though it lies hid a while, yet it grows up and produceth excellent fruit at last.

4. Those that are regenerate should love one another with a pure heart fervently. Brethren by nature are bound to love one another; but the obligation is double where there is a spiritual relation; they are under the same government, partake of the same privileges, and are embarked in the same interest.

5. The word of God liveth and abideth for ever. This word is a living word, or a lively word, Heb. iv. 12. It is a means of spiritual life to begin it and persevere in it, animating and exciting us in our duty, till it brings us to eternal life; and it is abiding; it remains eternally true, and abides in the hearts of the regenerate for ever.

24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The apostle having given an account of the excellency of the renewed spiritual man as born again, not of corruptible but incorruptible seed, he now sets before us the vanity of the natural man, taking him with all his ornaments and advantages about him; for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; and nothing can make him a solid substantial being, but the being born again of the incorruptible seed, the word of God, which will transform him into a most excellent creature, whose glory will not fade like a flower, but shine like an angel; and this word is daily set before you in the preaching of the gospel.

Learn, 1. Man in his utmost flourish and glory is still a withering, fading, dying creature. Take him singly, all flesh is grass. In his entrance into the world, in his life and in his fall, he is like to grass, Job xvi. 2. Isa. xl. 9. 7. Take him in all his glory, even that is as the flower of grass, his wit, beauty, strength, vigour, wealth, honour; these are but as the flower of grass, which soon withers and dies away.

2. The only way to render this perishing creature solid and incorruptible, is to entertain and receive the word of God, for that remains everlasting truth, and if received will preserve him to everlasting life, and abide with him for ever.

3. The prophets and apostles preached the same doctrine. This word, which Isaiah and others delivered in the Old Testament, is the same which the apostles preached in the new.

C H A P. II.

The general exhortation to holiness is continued and enforced by several reasons taken from the foundation on which Christians are built, Jesus Christ, and from their spiritual blessings and privileges in him. The means of obtaining it, the word of God, is recommended, and all contrary qualities are condemned, ver. 1—12. Particular directions are given how subjects ought to obey the magistrates, and servants their masters, patiently suffering in well doing, in imitation of Christ.

of God to others, as well as to himself; *the prophets* were highly delighted with the prospects of mercy to be shewn both to Jews and Gentiles at the coming of Christ.

3. They that would be acquainted with this great salvation, and the grace that shines therein, must enquire and search diligently into it: If it were necessary for an inspired prophet to do so, much more for persons so weak and injudicious as we are.

4. *The grace that came by the gospel* excels all that was before it; the gospel dispensation is more glorious, evident, intelligible, extensive, and effectual, than any dispensation that ever did precede it.

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Learn, 1. Jesus Christ had a being, and did exist before his incarnation; for his Spirit did then exist in the prophets, and therefore he whose that Spirit then was, must be in being also.

2. The doct ine of the Trinity was not wholly unknown to the faithful in the Old Testament; the prophets knew that they were inspired by a Spirit that was in them, this Spirit they knew to be the Spirit of Christ, and consequently distinct from Christ himself: here is a plurality of persons, and from other parts of the Old Testament a Trinity may be collected.

3. The works here ascribed to the Holy Ghost prove him to be God; he did signify, discover, and manifest to the prophets, many hundred years beforehand, the sufferings of Christ, with a multitude of particular circumstances attending them; and he did also testify, or give proof and evidence beforehand, of the certainty of that event, by inspiring the prophets to reveal it, to work miracles in confirmation of it, and by enabling the faithful to believe it; these works prove the Spirit of Christ to be God, since he is possessed of almighty power and infinite knowledge.

4. From the example of Christ Jesus, learn to expect a time of services and sufferings before you are received to glory; it was so with him, and the disciple is not above his Lord; the suffering time is but short, but the glory is everlasting; let the suffering season be never so sharp and severe, it shall not hinder, but work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The words contain an answer to the prophet's inquiry; their holy endeavours to inform themselves were not slighted, for God gives them a satisfactory revelation to quiet and comfort their minds; they were informed that these things should not come to pass in their time, but yet all was firm and certain, and should come to pass in the times of the apostles; not unto themselves, but unto us; and we must report them, under the infallible direction of the Holy Ghost, to all the world; which things the angels, &c.

You have here three sorts of students, or inquirers into the great affair of man's salvation by Jesus Christ: 1. *The prophets search diligently* into it. 2. *The apostles*, who consulted all the prophecies, and were witnesses of the accomplishment of them, and so reported what they knew to others in the preaching of the gospel. 3. *The Angels*, who most attentively pry into these matters.

Learn, 1. A diligent endeavour after the knowledge of Christ and our duty, will certainly be answered with good success: The prophets were answered with a revelation; Daniel studies, and receives information; the Bereans search the scriptures, and were confirmed.

2. The holiest and best of men sometimes have their lawful and pious requests denied: It was both lawful and pious for these prophets to desire to know more than they were permitted to know about the time of the appearance of Christ in the world, but they were denied: It is lawful and pious for good parents to pray for their wicked children, for the poor to pray against poverty, for a good man to pray against death, yet, in these honest requests, they often are denied: God is pleased to answer our necessities rather than our requests.

3. It is the honour and practice of a Christian to be useful to others in many cases, rather than to himself; the prophets ministered to others, not unto themselves; none of us liveth to himself, Rom. xiv. 7. Nothing more contrary to man's nature and Christian principles, than for a man to make himself his own end, and live to himself.

4. The revelations of God to his church, though gradual, and given by parcels, are all perfectly consistent; the doctrine of the prophets and of the apostles do exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God.

5. The efficacy of the evangelical ministry depends upon the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit; the success of it depends upon its operation and blessing.

6. The mysteries of the gospel, and the methods of man's salvation are so glorious, that the blessed angels do earnestly desire to look into them; they are curious, accurate, and industrious in prying into them; they consider the whole scheme of man's redemption with deep attention and admiration, particularly these points the apostle had been discoursing of; which things the angels desire to stoop down and look into, as the cherubims did continually towards the mercy seat.

13. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to them, whose glorious state he had before described, thereby instructing us, that Christianity is a doctrine according to godliness, designed not only to make us wiser, but better; wherefore, since you are so honoured and distinguished, as above.

Gird up the loins of your mind; you have a journey to go, a race to run, a warfare to accomplish, and a great work to do; as the traveller, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer gather in, and gird up their long and loose garments, that they may be more ready, prompt, and expeditious in their business; so do you by your minds, your inner man, and affections seated there; gird them, gather them in, let them not hang loose and neglected about you; restrain their extravagancies, and let the loins, or strength and vigour of your minds, be exerted in your duty; disengage yourselves from all that would hinder you, and go on resolutely in your obedience.

Be sober, be vigilant against all your spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate and modest in eating, drinking, apparel, recreation, business, and in the whole of your behaviour; *be sober minded* also in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves.

And hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Some refer this to the last judgment, as if the apostle did direct their hope to the final revelation of Jesus Christ; but it seems more natural to take it, as it might be rendered, *hope perfectly*, or thoroughly, *for the grace that is brought to you*, or by the revelation of Jesus Christ; that is, by the gospel which brings life and immortality to light; hope perfectly, trust without doubt to that grace which is now offered to you by the gospel.

Learn, 1. The main work of a Christian lies in the right management of his heart and mind; the apostle's first direction is to gird up the loins of the mind.

2. The best Christians have need to be exhorted to sobriety; these excellent Christians are put in mind of it; it is required of a bishop, 1. Tim. iii. 2. of aged men, Tit. ii. 2. the young women are to be taught it, and the young men are directed to be sober-minded, Tit. ii. 4, 6.

3. A Christian's work is not over as soon as he has got into a state of grace; he must still hope and strive for more grace; when he hath entered the strait gate, he must still walk in the narrow way, and gird up the loins of his mind for that purpose.

4. A strong and perfect trust in God's grace is very consistent with our best endeavours in our duty; we must hope perfectly, and yet gird up our loins, and address ourselves vigorously to the work we have to do, encouraging ourselves from the grace of Jesus Christ.

14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.

The exhortation is continued, and the words may be taken either as a rule of holy living, which is both positive, you ought to live as obedient children, and those whom God hath adopted into his family, and regenerated by his grace; and negative, you must not fashion yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance; or the words may be taken as an argument to press them to holiness from the consideration of what they now are, children of obedience, and what they were when they lived in lust and ignorance.

Learn, 1. The children of God ought to prove themselves to be such by their obedience to God, by their present, constant, universal obedience.

2. The best of God's children have had their times of lust and ignorance; the time hath been when the whole scheme of their lives, their way and fashion, was to accommodate and gratify their unlawful desires and vicious appetites, being grossly ignorant of God and themselves, of Christ and the gospel.

3. Persons converted differ exceedingly from what they were formerly; they are people of another fashion and manner from what they were before; their inward frame, behaviour, speech, and conversation, is much altered from what it was in times past.

4. The lusts and extravagancies of sinners, are both the fruits and signs of their ignorance.

15. But as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: 16. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Here is a noble rule enforced by strong arguments, *Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* Who is sufficient for this? and yet it is required in strong terms, and enforced by three reasons, taken from the grace of God, in calling us; from his command, it is written; and from his example, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.*

Learn, 1. The grace of God in calling a sinner is a powerful engagement to holiness; it is a mighty favour to be called effectually by divine grace out of a state of sin and misery, into the possession of all the blessings of the new covenant; and great favours are strong obligations; it does enable as well as oblige to holiness.

2. Complete holiness is the desire and duty of every Christian; here is a twofold rule of holiness; (1.) It must, for the extent of it, be universal, must be holy, and be so in all manner of conversation; in all civil and religious affairs, in every condition, prosperous or adverse; towards all people, friends or enemies; in all our intercourse and business still we must be holy. (2.) For the pattern of it, we must be holy, as God is holy; we must imitate him, though we can never equal him; he is perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally holy; and we should aspire after such a state: The consideration of the holiness of God should oblige us to the highest degrees of holiness we can attain unto.

3. The written word of God is the surest rule of a Christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to be holy every way.

4. The Old Testament commands are to be studied and obeyed in the times of the New Testament; the apostle, by virtue of a command delivered several times by Moses, requires holiness in all Christians.

17. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

The apostle does not here express any doubt at all, whether these Christians would call upon their heavenly Father, but supposes they would certainly do it, and from that argues with them to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear: if you own the great God as a Father and a judge, you ought to live the time of your sojourning here in his fear.

Learn, 1. All good Christians look upon themselves in this world as pilgrims and sojourners, as strangers in a distant country, passing to another, in which they properly belong, Psalm xxxix. 17. Heb. xi. 13.

2. The whole time of our sojourning here is to be passed in the fear of God.

3. The consideration of God as a judge, is not improper for those that can truly call him Father; holy confidence in God as a Father, and an awful fear

fear of him as a Judge, are very consistent; to regard God as a Judge, is a singular means to endear him to us as a Father.

4. The judgment of God will be *without respect to persons, according to every man's works*; no external relation to him will protect any; the Jew may call God Father, and Abraham father, but God will not *respect persons* or favour their cause from personal considerations, but *judge them according to their work*; the works of men will in the great day discover their persons; God will make all the world to know who are his by their works; we are obliged to faith, holiness, and obedience, and our works will be an evidence whether we have complied with our obligations or no.

18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The apostle having exhorted to *pass the time of our life in the fear of God*, from this consideration, that we *call on the Father*; he adds, in these words, a second argument, because, *forasmuch as we are redeemed by the Son, &c.* wherein he puts them in mind, 1. That they were redeemed, or brought back again, by a ransom paid to the Father. 2. What the price paid for their redemption was; *not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ*. 3. They knew this; *forasmuch as ye know*, and cannot pretend ignorance of this great affair. 4. From what they were redeemed; *from a vain conversation received by tradition*.

Learn, 1. That the consideration of our redemption ought to be a constant and powerful inducement to holiness, and the fear of God.

2. God expects that a Christian should give answerably to what he knows, and therefore we have great need to be put in mind of what we already know. *Psal. xxxix. 4.*

3. Neither silver nor gold, nor any of the corruptible things of this world, can redeem so much as one soul; they are often figures, temptations, and hindrances to man's salvation, but they can by no means purchase or procure it; they are corruptible, and therefore cannot redeem an incorruptible and immortal soul.

4. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only price of man's redemption; the redemption of man is real, not metaphorical; *we are bought with a price*, and the price is equal to the purchase, for it is the *precious blood of Christ*, it is the blood of an innocent person, a lamb without blemish and without spot, whom the Jewish law did represent, and of an infinite person, being the Son of God, and therefore is called the blood of God, *Acts ix. 28.*

5. The design of Christ in shedding his most precious blood was to redeem us, not only from eternal misery hereafter, but from a vain conversation in this world. That conversation is vain, that is empty, frivolous, trifling, and unserviceable to the honour of God, the credit of religion, the conviction of unbelievers, and the comfort and satisfaction of a man's own conscience. Not only the open wickedness, but the vanity and unprofitableness of our conversation is highly dangerous.

6. It is possible a man's conversation may carry an appearance of devotion, and may plead antiquity, custom and tradition in its defence, and yet after all be a most vain conversation. The Jews had a deal to say from these heads, for all their formalities; and yet their conversation was so vain, that only the blood of Christ could redeem them from it. Antiquity is no certain rule of verity, nor is it a wise resolution, "I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so."

20. Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you; 21. Who by him believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

The Redeemer is farther described not only as a lamb without spot, but as one, 1. That was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, fore-ordained or foreknown. When perfection is ascribed to God, it implies more than bare prospect or speculation. It does import an act of the will, a resolution that the thing shall be, *Acts ii. 23.* God did not only fore-know, but determine and decree that his Son should die for man, and this decree was before the foundation of the world. Time and the world began together: before the commencement of time there was nothing but eternity.

2. That he was manifested in these last days for you. He was manifested or demonstrated to be that redeemer whom God had fore-ordained. He was manifested by his birth, by his Father's testimony, and by his own works, especially by his resurrection from the dead, *Rom. i. 4.* This was done in these last times of the New Testament and of the gospel, for you, you Jews, you sinners, you afflicted ones, you have the comfort of the manifestation and appearance of Christ, if you believe on him.

3. That God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory. The resurrection of Christ, considered as an act of power, is common to all the three persons, but as an act of judgment is peculiar to the Father, who as a judge released Christ, and raised him from the grave, and gave him glory, proclaimed him to all the world to be his Son by his resurrection from the dead, advanced him to heaven, crowned him with glory and honour, invested him with all power in heaven and earth, and glorified him with that glory which he had with God, before the world was.

The redeemed are also described here by their faith and hope. The cause of which is Jesus Christ; *you do by him believe in God*. By him as the author, encourager, support and finisher of your faith; your faith and hope now may be in God, as reconciled to you by Christ the mediator.

Learn, 1. The decree of God to send Christ to be a mediator was from everlasting, and was a just and merciful decree, which yet does not at all excuse man's sin in crucifying him, *Acts ii. 23.* God had purposes of special favour towards his people, long before he made any manifestations of such grace unto them.

2. Grace is the happiness of the last times in comparison with what the former ages of the world did enjoy. The clearness of light, the supports of faith, the efficacy of ordinances, and the proportion of comforts; these are all much larger since the manifestation of Christ than they were before. Our gratitude and services should be suitable to such favours.

3. The redemption of Christ belongs to none but true believers. A general imputation is asserted by some, and denied by others; but none pretend to a general application of Christ's death for the salvation of all. Hypocrites and unbelievers will be ruined for ever, notwithstanding the death of Christ.

4. God in Christ is the ultimate object of a Christian's faith, which is strongly supported by the resurrection of Christ, and the glory that did follow.

22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently.

Here the apostle begins another exhortation to brotherly love, wherein he supposeth that the gospel had already such an effect upon them, as to purify their souls, while they obeyed it through the Spirit, and that it had produced at least an *unfeigned love of the brethren*; and from thence he argues with them to proceed to an higher degree of affection, to love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Learn, 1. It is not to be doubted but that every sincere Christian purifies his soul. The apostle takes that for granted, *seeing ye have, &c.* To purify the soul supposeth some great uncleanness and defilement which had polluted it, and that this defilement is removed. Neither the Levitical purifications under the law, nor the hypocritical purifications of the outward man can effect this.

2. The word of God is the great instrument of a sinner's purification. *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth*. The gospel is called truth, in opposition to types and shadows, and to error and falsehood. This truth is effectual to purify the soul if it be obeyed, *John xvii. 17.* Many hear the truth, but are never purified by it, because they will not submit to it nor obey it.

3. The Spirit of God is the great agent in the purifications of man's soul. The Spirit convinceth the soul of its impurities, furnishes those virtues and graces that do both adorn and purify, such as faith, *Acts xv. 9.* hope, *1 John iii. 3.* the fear of God, *Psal. xiv. 9.* and the love of Jesus Christ. The Spirit excites our endeavours, and makes them successful. The aid of the Spirit does not supersede our own industry; these people purified their own souls, but it was through the Spirit.

4. The souls of Christians must be purified before they can so much as love one another unfeignedly. There are those lusts and partialities in man's nature, that without divine grace we can neither love God nor one another as we ought to do; there is no charity but out of a pure heart.

5. It is the duty of all Christians sincerely and fervently to love one another. Our affection to one another must be sincere and real, and it must be fervent, constant, and extensive.

23. Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.

The duty of loving one another with a pure heart fervently, the apostle does farther press upon Christians from the consideration of their spiritual relation; they are *born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, &c.* From whence we may learn,

1. That all Christians are born again. The apostle speaks of it as what is common to all serious Christians, and by this they are brought into a new and new relation one to another, they become brethren by their new birth.

2. The word of God is the great means of regeneration, *James i. 18.* The grace of regeneration is conveyed by the gospel.

3. This new and second birth is much more desirable and excellent than the first. This the apostle teaches by preferring the incorruptible to the corruptible seed. By the one we become the children of men, by the other the sons and daughters of the most High. The word of God being compared to seed, teaches us, that though it be little in appearance, yet it is wonderful in operation; though it lies hid a while, yet it grows up and produces excellent fruit at last.

4. Those that are regenerate should love one another with a pure heart fervently. Brethren by nature are bound to love one another; but the obligation is double where there is a spiritual relation; they are under the same government, partake of the same privileges, and are embarked in the same interest.

5. The word of God liveth and abideth for ever. This word is a living word, or a lively word, *Heb. iv. 12.* It is a means of spiritual life to begin it and persevere in it, animating and exciting us in our duty, till it brings us to eternal life; and it is abiding; it remains eternally true, and abides in the hearts of the regenerate for ever.

24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The apostle having given an account of the excellency of the renewed spiritual man as born again, not of corruptible but incorruptible seed, he now sets before us the vanity of the natural man, taking him with all his ornaments and advantages about him; *for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass*; and nothing can make him a solid substantial being, but the being born again of the incorruptible seed, the word of God, which will transform him into a most excellent creature, whose glory will not fade like a flower, but shine like an angel; and this word is daily set before you in the preaching of the gospel.

Learn, 1. Man in his utmost flourish and glory is still a withering, fading, dying creature. Take him singly, all flesh is grass. In his entrance into the world, in his life and in his fall, he is like to grass, *Joh. xvi. 2. Isa. xl. 9, 7.* Take him in all his glory, even that is as the flower of grass, his wit, beauty, strength, vigour, wealth, honour; these are but as the flower of grass, which soon withers and dies away.

2. The only way to render this perishing creature solid and incorruptible, is to entertain and receive the word of God, for that remains everlasting truth, and if received will preserve him to everlasting life, and abide with him for ever.

3. The prophets and apostles preached the same doctrine. This word, which Isaiah and others delivered in the Old Testament, is the same which the apostles preached in the new.

C H A P. II.

The general exhortation to holiness is continued and enforced by several reasons taken from the foundation on which Christians are built, Jesus Christ, and from their spiritual blessings and privileges in him. The means of obtaining it, the word of God, is recommended, and all contrary qualities are condemned, ver. 1—12. Particular directions are given how subjects ought to obey the magistrates, and servants their masters, patiently suffering in well doing, in imitation of Christ.

1. **WHEREFORE** laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

The holy apostle hath been recommending mutual charity, and setting forth the excellencies of the word of God, calling it an incorruptible seed, and saying that it liveth and abideth for ever. He pursues his discourse, and very properly comes in with this necessary advice, *wherefore laying aside all malice, &c.* These are such sort of sins as do both destroy charity and hinder the efficacy of the word, and consequently prevent our regeneration. His advice is to lay aside or put off, as one would do an old rotten garment, cast it away with indignation, never put it on more. The sins to be put off, or thrown aside, are, 1. *Malice*, which may be taken more generally for all sorts of wickedness, as *James i. 21. 1 Cor. v. 8.* But in a more confined sense, malice is anger rising in the bosom of fools, settled, overgrown anger, retained till it inflames a man to design mischief, to do mischief, or delight in any mischief that befalls another.

2. *Guile*, or deceit in words. So it comprehends flattery, falsehood, and delusion, which is a crafty imposing upon another's ignorance or weakness to his damage.

3. *Hypocrisies*. The word being plural, comprehends all sorts of hypocrisies. In matters of religion hypocrisy is counterfeit piety. In civil conversation hypocrisy is counterfeit friendship, which is much practised by those that give high compliments, which they do not believe, or make promises which they never intend to perform, or pretend friendship when mischief lies in their hearts.

4. *All envies*. Every thing that may be called envy, which is a grieving at the good and welfare of another; at their abilities, prosperity, fame, or successful labours.

5. *Evil speaking*, which is detraction, speaking against another, or defaming him, it is rendered backbiting, *2 Cor. xii. 20. Rom. i. 30.*

Learn, 1. The best Christians have need to be cautioned and warned against the worst sins, such as malice, hypocrisy, envy. They are but sanctified in part, are still liable to temptations.

2. Our best services towards God will neither please him, nor profit us, if we are not conscientious in our duties to men. The sins here mentioned are offences against the second table. These must be laid aside, or else we cannot receive the word of God as we ought to do.

3. Whereas it is said, all malice, all guile. Learn, That one sin not laid aside will hinder our spiritual profit and everlasting welfare.

4. Malice, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, and evil-speaking, generally go together. Evil-speaking is a sign that malice and guile lie in the heart: and all of them combine to hinder our profiting by the word of God.

2. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

The apostle, like a wise physician, having prescribed the purging out of vicious humours, goes on to direct to wholesome and regular food, that they may grow thereby. The duty exhorted to, is a strong and constant desire of the word of God, which word is here called reasonable milk. Only that phrase not being proper English, our translators turned it *the milk of the word*, by which we are to understand food proper for the soul, or a reasonable creature, whereby the mind, not the body, is nourished and strengthened. This milk of the word must be sincere, not adulterated by the mixtures of men, who often corrupt the word of God, *2 Cor. ii. 17.* The manner how they are to desire this sincere milk of the word is stated thus: As new-born babes. He puts them in mind of their regeneration. A new life requires suitable food. They being newly born, must desire the milk of the word: Infants desire common milk, and their desires towards it are fervent and frequent, arising from an impatient sense of hunger, and accompanied with the best endeavours the infant is capable of; such must Christians desire after the word of God: And that for this end, that they may grow thereby, that we may improve in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, *2 Peter iii. 18.*

Learn, 1. Strong desires and affections to the word of God, are a sure evidence of a person being born again. If they be such desires as the babe hath for the milk, they prove that the person is new born. They are the lowest evidence, but yet they are certain.

2. Growth and improvement in wisdom and grace is the design and desire of every Christian; all spiritual means are for edification and improvement. The word of God rightly used does not leave a man as it finds him, but improves and makes him better.

3. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

If so be, or since that, or forasmuch as ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The apostle does not express a doubt, but affirms that these good Christians had tasted the goodness of God, and from hence argues with them, you ought to lay aside these vile sins, *ver. 1.* you ought to desire the word of God, you ought to grow thereby, since you cannot deny but that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The next verse assures us, that the Lord here spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence,

Learn, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ is very gracious to his people. He is in himself infinitely good; he is very kind, free, merciful to miserable sinners; he is pitiful and good to the undeserving; he hath in him a fulness of grace.

2. The graciousness of our Redeemer is best discovered by an experimental taste of it. There must be an immediate application of the object to the organ of taste; we cannot taste at a distance, as we may see, and hear, and smell. To taste the graciousness of Christ experimentally, supposeth our being united to him by faith, and then we may taste his goodness in all his providences, in all our spiritual concerns, in all our fears and temptations, in his word and worship every day.

3. The best of God's servants have in this life but a taste of the grace of Christ. A taste is but a little; it is not a draught, nor does it satisfy. It is so with the consolations of God in this life.

4. The word of God is the great instrument whereby he discovers and communicates his grace to men. They that feed upon the sincere milk of the word, they taste and experience most of his grace. In our converse with his word we should endeavour always to understand and experience more and more of his grace.

4. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

The apostle here enters upon a description of Jesus Christ, which he continues to *ver. 19.* Though to a capricious wit, or an infidel, the description of Christ by a stone may seem rough and harsh; yet to the Jews

who placed much of their religion on their magnificent temple, and who understood the prophetic style, which calls the Messiah a stone, (*Isa. viii. 14.—xxviii. 16.*) this manner of speaking was very elegant and proper. In this metaphorical description of Jesus Christ, he is called a stone to denote his invincible strength and everlasting duration, and to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built, and a rock of offence to all their enemies. He is the living stone; having eternal life in himself, and being the prince of life to all his people.

The reputation and respect he hath with God and man is very different. He is disallowed of men, reprobated or rejected by his own countrymen the Jews, and by the generality of mankind, but chosen of God, separated and fore-ordained to be the foundation of the church, as *chap. i. 20.* and precious, a most honourable, choice, worthy person, both in himself, in the esteem of God, and in the judgment of all that believe on him.

To this person so described we are obliged to come. To whom coming, not by a local motion, for that is impossible since his exaltation, but by faith, whereby we are united to him at first, and draw nigh to him ever after.

Learn, 1. That Jesus Christ is the very foundation stone of all our hopes and happiness. He communicates the true knowledge of God, *Matt. xi. 7.* By him we have access to the Father, *John xiv. 6.* and through him are made partakers of all spiritual blessings, *Eph. i. 3.*

2. Men in general do disallow and reject Jesus Christ; they slight him, dislike him, oppose and refuse him, as scripture and experience declare, *Isa. liii. 3.*

3. However Christ be disallowed by an ungrateful world, yet he is chosen of God, and precious in his account. He is chosen and fixed upon to be the Lord of the universe, the head of the church, the saviour of his people, and the judge of the world. He is precious in the excellency of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the gloriousness of his services.

4. Those that expect mercy from this gracious Redeemer, must come to him, which is our act, though done by God's grace; an act of the soul, not of the body; a real endeavour, not a fruitless wish.

5. Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The foundation was laid, *ver. 4.* Here is the superstructure, the materials built upon it, *ye also as living stones are built up.* The apostle is recommending the Christian church and constitution to these dispersed Jews. It was natural for them to object, that the Christian church had no such glorious temple, nor such a numerous priesthood, but its dispensation was mean, the services and sacrifices of it having nothing of that pomp and grandeur which the Jewish dispensation had. To which the apostle answers, that the Christian church is a much nobler fabric than the Jewish temple, it is a living temple, consisting not of dead materials, but of living parts. Christ the foundation is a living stone, and Christians are lively stones, and these make a spiritual house, and they are an holy priesthood, and though they have no bloody sacrifices of beasts to offer, yet they have much better and more acceptable, and they have an altar too on which to present their offerings; for they offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Learn, 1. That all sincere Christians have in them a principle of spiritual life, derived to them from Christ their head: Therefore as he is called a living stone, so they are called lively, or living stones; not dead in trespasses and sins, but alive to God by regeneration and the working of the divine Spirit.

2. The church of God is a spiritual house. The foundation is Christ, *Eph. ii. 20.* The builders are ministers, *1 Cor. iii. 10.* The inhabitant is God, *Eph. ii. 22.* It is an house for its strength, beauty, variety of parts, and usefulness of the whole; it is spiritual in its foundation, Christ Jesus; in the materials of it, spiritual persons; in its furniture, the graces of the Spirit; in its connection, being held together by the Spirit of God, and by one common faith; and in its use, which is spiritual work, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. This house is daily built up, every part of it improving, and the whole supplied in every age by the addition of new particular members.

3. All good Christians are an holy priesthood. The apostle speaks here of the generality of Christians, and tells them they are an holy priesthood; they are all select persons, sacred to God, serviceable to others, well endowed with heavenly gifts and graces, and well employed.

4. This holy priesthood must and will offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. The spiritual sacrifices which Christians are to offer, are their bodies, souls, affections, prayers, praises, alms, and other duties.

5. The most spiritual sacrifices of the best men are not acceptable to God, but through Jesus Christ; he is the only great high-priest, through whom we and our services can be accepted; therefore bring all your oblations to him, and by him present them to God.

6. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him, shall not be confounded.

What was asserted before of Christ, his being a living stone, &c. is here proved from *Isa. xxviii. 16.* Where observe the manner of the apostle's quoting scripture, not by book, chapter and verse; for these distinctions were not then made, so no more was said than a reference to Moses, David, or the prophets, except once a particular psalm was named, *Acts xiii. 33.* In their quotations they kept rather to the sense than the words of scripture, as appears from what is recited from the prophet in this place. He doth not quote the scripture, either the Hebrew or LXX. word for word, yet makes a just and true quotation. The true sense of scripture may be justly and fully expressed in other than in scripture words. It is contained: The verb is active, but our translators render it passively, to avoid the difficulty of finding a nominative case for it, which had puzzled so many interpreters before them.

The matter of the quotation is this, *Behold I lay in Zion.*

Learn, 1. In the weighty matters of religion we must depend entirely upon scripture proof; Christ and his apostles appealed to Moses, David, and the ancient prophets. The word of God is the only rule God hath given us; it is a perfect and sufficient rule; and it is an intelligible and a certain rule.

2. The accounts that God hath given us in scripture concerning his Son Jesus Christ, are what require our strictest attention, *Behold, I lay—John* calls for the like attention, *John i. 29.* These demands of attention to Christ shew us the excellency of the matter, the importance of it, and our stupidity and dulness.

3. The constituting Christ Jesus head of the church, is an eminent work of God. *I lay in Zion.* The setting up the pope for head of the church, is a human contrivance and an arrogant presumption; Christ only is the foundation and head of the church of God.

4. Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone that God hath laid in his spiritual building. The corner-stone stays inseparably with the building, supports it, unites it, and adorns it: So does Christ by his holy church, his spiritual house.

5. Jesus Christ is the corner stone, for the support and salvation of none but such as are his sincere people. None but Zion, and such as are of Zion, not for Babylon; not for his enemies.

6. True faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to prevent a man's utter confusion. Three things put a man into great confusion, and faith prevents them all; disappointment, sin, and judgment. Faith hath a remedy for each.

7. Unto you therefore which believe *he is precious*; but unto them which he disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

These words are an inference from what went before; Jesus Christ is said to be the chief corner-stone, &c. Hence the apostle infers with respect to good men, to you therefore that believe he is precious, or he is an honour. Christ is the crown and honour of a Christian; you that believe will be so far from being ashamed of him, that you will boast of him, and glory in him for ever.

As to *wicked men*, the disobedient will go on to disallow and reject Jesus Christ; but God is resolved that he shall be, in despite of all opposition, the head of the corner.

Learn, 1. Whatever is by just and necessary consequence deduced from scripture, may be depended upon with as much certainty as if it were contained in express words of scripture. The apostle draws an inference from the prophet's testimony. The prophet did not expressly say so, but yet he said that from which the consequence was unavoidable. Our Saviour bids them search the scriptures, because they testified of him; and yet no place in those scriptures to which he there refers them, said, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah: But yet those scriptures do say, that he that should be born of a virgin, before the sceptre departed from Judah, during the second temple, and after Daniel's seventy weeks, was the Messiah; but such was Jesus Christ. To collect which conclusion, one must make use of reason, history, eye-sight, experience; and yet it is an infallible scripture conclusion for all that.

2. The business of a faithful minister is, to apply general truths to the particular condition and state of their hearers. The apostle quotes a passage, *ver. 6.* out of the prophet, then he applies it severally to good and bad. This requires wisdom, courage, and fidelity. But it is very profitable to the hearers.

3. Jesus Christ is exceeding precious to all the faithful. The majesty and grandeur of his person, the dignity of his office, his near relation, his wonderful works, his immense love; every thing engages the faithful to the highest esteem and respect for Jesus Christ.

4. Disobedient people have no true faith: By disobedient people, understand them that are unpersecutable, incredulous, and impenitent. These may have some right notions, but no solid faith.

5. They that ought to be builders of the church of Christ, are often the worst enemies that Christ hath in the world. In the Old Testament the false prophets did the most mischief; and in the New Testament, the greatest opposition and cruelty that Christ met with was from the scribes, pharisees, chief priests, and those that pretended to build and take care of the church: still the hierarchy of Rome is the worst enemy in the world to Jesus Christ and his interest.

6. God will carry on his own work, and support the interest of Jesus Christ in the world, notwithstanding the falseness of pretended friends, and the opposition of his worst enemies.

8. And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.

The words are taken from Isa. viii. 13. 14. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself—and he shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence.* From whence it is plain, that Jesus Christ is the Lord of hosts, and consequently the most high God.

The builders, the chief priests, refused him, and the people followed their leaders; and so Christ became to them a *stone of stumbling* and a *rock of offence*, at which they stumbled and hurt themselves; and in return he fell upon them as a mighty stone or rock, and punished them with destruction, Matt. xxi. 44. *Whoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

Learn, 1. All those that are disobedient take offence at the word of God. *They stumble at the word, being disobedient.* They are offended with Christ himself, with his doctrine and the purity of his precepts; but the Jewish doctors more especially stumbled at the meanness of his appearance, and the proposal of trusting only to him for their justification before God. They could not be brought to seek justification by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; *for they stumbled at that stumbling stone*, Rom. ix. 32.

2. The same blessed Jesus, who is the author of salvation to some, is to others the occasion of their sin and destruction: *He is set for the rising and fall of many in Israel.* He is not the author of their sin, but only the occasion of it; their own disobedience makes them stumble at him and reject him; which he punishes, as a judge, with destruction. They that rejected him as a saviour will split upon him as a rock.

3. God himself hath appointed everlasting destruction to all those who *stumble at the word, being disobedient.* All those that go on resolutely in their infidelity and contempt of the gospel, are appointed to eternal destruction; and God from eternity knows who they are.

4. To see the Jews generally rejecting Christ, and multitudes in all ages slighting him, ought not to discourage us in our love and duty to him; for this had been foretold by the prophets long ago, and is a confirmation of our faith both in the scriptures and in the Messiah.

9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

The Jews were exceeding tender of their ancient privileges, of being the only people of God, taken into a special covenant with him, and separated from the rest of the world. Now, say they, if we submit to the gospel constitution, we shall lose all this, and stand upon the same level with the

Gentiles. To this objection the apostle answers, 1. That if they did not submit, they were ruined, *ver. 7. 8.* 2. That if they did submit, they should lose no real advantage, but continue still what they desired to be, *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, &c.*

Learn, 1. That all true Christians are a *chosen generation*, they all make one family, a sort and species of people distinct from the common world; of another spirit, principle, and practice; which they could never be, if they were not chosen in Christ to be such, and sanctified by his Spirit.

2. All the true servants of Christ are a *royal priesthood*; they are royal in their relation to God and Christ; in their power with God and over themselves and all their spiritual enemies; they are princely in the improvements and excellency of their own spirits, and in their hopes and expectations; they are a *royal priesthood*, separated from sin and sinners, consecrated to God, and offering to God spiritual services and oblations acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ.

3. All Christians, whereforever they be, compose one *holy nation*; they are one nation collected under one head, agreeing in the same manners and customs, and governed by the same laws. And they are an *holy nation*, because consecrated and devoted to God, renewed and sanctified by his holy Spirit.

4. It is the honour of the servants of Christ, that they are God's *peculiar people*: They are the people of his acquisition, choice, care, and delight. These four dignities of all genuine Christians are not natural to them; for their first state is a state of horrid darkness, but they are effectually *called out of darkness* into a state of *marvellous light*, joy, pleasure, and prosperity; with this intent and view, that they *should shew forth*, by words and actions, the virtues and praises of him that hath called them.

10. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

To make this people content and thankful for the great mercies and dignities brought unto them by the gospel, the apostle adviseth them to compare their former and their present state. Time was when they were not a people, nor had they obtained mercy, but were solemnly disinherited and divorced, *Jer. iii. 8. Hos. i. 6—9.* But now they are taken in again to be the people of God, and have obtained mercy.

Learn, 1. The best people ought frequently to look back upon what they were in time past.

2. The people of God are the most valuable people in the world; all the rest are *not a people*; good for little.

3. To be brought into the number of the people of God is a very great mercy, and it may be obtained.

11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Even the best of men, the *chosen generation*, the *people of God*, need an exhortation to abstain from the world's sins, which the apostle here proceeds most earnestly and affectionately to warn them against. Knowing the difficulty, and yet the importance of the duty, he useth his utmost interest in them, *dearly beloved, I beseech you.*

The duty is to abstain from, and to suppress, the first inclination or rise of *fleshly lusts*. There are many of them that proceed from the corruption of nature, which in their exercise depend upon the body, gratifying some sensual appetite, or inordinate inclination of the flesh. These Christians ought to avoid, considering,

1. The respect they have with God and good men: They are *dearly beloved*.

2. Their condition in the world, *They are strangers and pilgrims*, and should not impede their passage by giving in to the wickedness and lusts of the country through which they pass.

3. The mischief and danger these sins do: *They war against the soul*; and therefore your souls ought to war against them.

Learn, 1. The great mischief that sin does to man is this, it *wars against the soul*; it destroys the moral liberty of the soul; it weakens and debilitates the soul by impairing its faculties: it robs the soul of its comfort and peace: it debaseth and destroys the dignity of the soul; hinders its present prosperity, and plunges it into everlasting misery.

2. Of all sorts of sin, none is more injurious to the soul than *fleshly lusts*. Carnal appetites, lewdness, and sensuality, are most odious to God, and destructive to man's soul. It is a sore judgment to be given up to them.

12. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

These Christian people are here exhorted to adorn their profession by an honest conversation. Their conversation in every turn, every instance, and every action of their lives, ought to be honest; that is, good, lovely, decent, amiable, and without blame. And that because they lived among the Gentiles, people of another religion, and who were inveterate enemies to them, that did already slander them, and constantly speak evil of them as *evil doers*. A clean, just, good conversation may not only stop their mouths, but may possibly be a means to bring them to glorify God, and turn to you, when they shall see you excel all others in good works: They now call you evil doers, vindicate yourselves by good works; and this is the way to convince them. There is a *day of visitation* coming, wherein God may call them by his word and his grace to repentance, and then they will glorify God, and applaud you for your excellent conversation, *Luke i. 68.* When the gospel shall come among them and take effect, a good conversation will encourage them in their conversion, but an evil one will obstruct it.

Note, 1. A Christian profession should be attended with an honest conversation, *Phil. iv. 8.*

2. It is the common lot of the best Christians to be evil spoken of by wicked men.

3. Those that are under God's gracious visitation, do presently change their opinion of good people, glorifying God, and commending them, who before they ruled at as *evil doers*.

13. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14. Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

The general rule of a Christian conversation is this, it must be honest; which it cannot be, if there be not a conscientious discharge of all relative duties; the apostle does here begin to treat of those distinctly. Christians were not only reputed innovators in religion, but disturbers of the state; it was highly necessary the apostle should settle the rules and measures of obedience to the civil magistrate, which he does here; where, 1. The duty required is submission, which contains loyalty and reverence to their persons, obedience to their just laws and commands, and subjection to legal penalties.

2. The persons or objects to whom this submission is due are described.

1. More generally; *every ordinance of man*: Magistracy is certainly of divine right, but the particular form of government, the power of the magistrate, and the persons who are to execute this power, are of human institution, and are governed by the laws and constitutions of each particular country; and this is a general rule, binding in all nations, let the established form of government be what it will.

2. Particularly: *to the king, as supreme*; first in dignity and most eminent in degree; *the king* is a legal person, not a tyrant; *or unto governors, deputies, proconsuls, rulers of provinces, who are sent by him*, that is, commissioned by him to govern.

3. The reasons to enforce this duty are, 1. It must be done *for the Lord's sake*, who hath ordained magistracy for the good of mankind, who hath required obedience and submission, *Rom. xiii.* and whose honour is concerned in the dutiful behaviour of subjects to their sovereigns.

2. Reason; from the end and use of the magistrate's office, which is to punish evil-doers, and to praise and encourage all them that do well. They were appointed for the good of societies, and where this end is not pursued, the fault is not in their institution but their practice.

1. True religion is the best support of civil government, it requires submission *for the Lord's sake, and for conscience sake.*

2. All the punishments, and all the magistrates in the world, cannot hinder but there will be evil-doers in it.

3. The best way the magistrate can take to discharge his own office, and to amend the world, is to punish well and reward well.

15. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Here is another reason why Christians should submit to the civil magistrate, because it is *the will of God*, and, consequently, their duty; and because it is the way to *put to silence the malicious slanders of ignorant and foolish men.*

Learn, 1. *The will of God* is, to a good man, the strongest reason for any duty.

2. Obedience to magistrates is a considerable branch of a Christian's duty; *so is the will of God.*

3. A Christian must endeavour, in all relations, to behave himself so as to *put to silence the unreasonable reproaches of the most ignorant and foolish men.*

4. Those that speak against religion and religious people, are ignorant and foolish.

16. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

The Jews, from *Deut. xvii. 15.* concluded, that they were bound to obey no sovereign, but one *taken from among their own brethren*; and the converted Jews thought they were free from subjection by their relation to Christ: To prevent these mistakes, the apostle tells the Christians that they were free; but from what? not from duty and obedience to God's law, which requires subjection to the civil magistrate; they were free spiritually from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the ceremonial law; but they must not make their Christian liberty a cloke or covering for any wickedness, or the neglect of any duty towards God, or towards their superiors, but must still remember they were the servants of God.

Learn, 1. All the servants of Christ are free men, *John viii. 36.* they are free from Satan's dominion, the law's condemnation, the wrath of God, the unbelief of duty, and the terrors of death.

2. The servants of Jesus Christ ought to be very careful not to abuse their Christian liberty; they must not make it a cover or cloke for any wickedness against God, or disobedience to superiors.

17. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

The apostle concludes his discourse concerning the duty of subjects with four admirable precepts: 1. *Honour all men.* A due respect is to be given to all men; the poor are not to be despised, *Prov. xvii. 5.* the wicked must be honoured, not for their wickedness, but for any other qualities, such as wit, prudence, courage, eminency of employment, or the hoary head; Abram, Jacob, Samson, the prophets, and apostles, never scrupled to give due honour to bad men.

2. *Love the brotherhood.* All Christians are a fraternity, united to Christ the head, alike disposed and qualified, nearly related in the same interest, having communion one with another, and going to the same home, and therefore should love one another with an especial affection.

3. *Fear God* with the highest reverence, duty and submission; if this be wanting, none of the other three duties can be performed as they ought.

4. *Honour the king*, with that highest honour that is peculiarly due to him above other men.

18. Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

The case of servants wanted an apostolical determination as well as that of subjects, for they imagined that their Christian liberty did set them free from their unbelieving and cruel masters; to this the apostle answers, *servants, be subject*; by servants, he means those that were strictly such, whether hired, or bought with money, or taken in the wars, or born in the house, or those that serve by contract for a limited time, as apprentices; then he orders to *be subject*, to do their business, faithfully and honestly, to carry themselves, as inferiors ought, with reverence and affection, and to submit patiently to hardships and inconveniences; this subjection they owe to their masters, who have a right to their service; and that not only to the good and gentle, such as do use them well, and abate somewhat of their right, but even to the crooked and perverse, who are scarce to be pleased at all.

Learn, 1. Servants ought to carry themselves to their masters with submission, and fear of displeasing them.

2. The sinful miscarriage of one relation does not justify the sinful behaviour of the other, the servant is bound to do his duty, though the master be sinfully froward and perverse.

3. Good people are to be meek and gentle to their servants, and inferiors.

19. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take patiently; this is acceptable with God.

Our holy apostle shews his love and concern for the souls of poor servants, as well as for higher people; herein he ought to be imitated by all inferior ministers, who should distinctly apply their counsels to the lower, the meaner, the younger, and the poorer sort of their hearers, as well as others; having charged them to be subject, he condescends to reason with them about it: if they were patient under their hardships, while they suffered unjustly, and continued doing their duty to their unbelieving and untoward masters, this would be acceptable to God, and he would reward all that they suffered for conscience towards him; but to be patient when they were justly chastised, this deserves no commendation at all; it is only doing well and suffering patiently for that, which is acceptable with God.

Learn, 1. There is no condition so mean, but a man may live conscientiously in it and glorify God in it; the meanest servant may do so.

2. The most conscientious persons are very often the greatest sufferers; for conscience towards God they suffer wrongfully; they do well, and suffer for it; but these sort of sufferers are praise-worthy, they do honour to God and to religion, and they are accepted of him; and this is their highest support and satisfaction.

3. Deserved sufferings must be endured with patience; if ye are buffeted for your faults, ye must take it patiently; sufferings in this world are not always pledges of our future happiness; if children, or servants are rude and undutiful, and suffer for it, this will neither be acceptable with God, nor procure the praise of men.

21. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

More reasons are given to encourage Christian servants to patience under unjust sufferings: 1. From their Christian calling and profession; *hereunto were ye called.* 2. From the example of Christ, who suffered for us, and so became our example, that we should follow his steps. From whence learn,

1. That good Christians are a sort of people called to be sufferers, and therefore they must expect it; by the terms of Christianity they are bound to deny themselves, and take up the cross; they are called by the commands of Christ, by the dispensations of providence, by the preparations of divine grace, and, by the practice of Jesus Christ, they are bound to suffer, when thus called to it.

2. Jesus Christ suffered for you, or for us; it was not the Father that suffered, but he whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world for that end; it was both the body and soul of Christ that suffered, and he suffered for us, in our stead, and for our good, *ver. 24.*

3. The sufferings of Christ should quiet us under the most unjust and cruel sufferings we meet with in the world; he suffered voluntarily, not for himself, but for us, with the utmost readiness, with perfect patience, from all quarters, and all those, though he was God-man; shall not we do ours, that deserve the worst, submit to the light afflictions of this life, which work for us unspeakable advantages afterwards?

22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

The example of Christ's subjection and patience is here explained and applied: *Christ suffered.*

(1.) Wrongfully, and without cause; for he did no sin, *Isa. liii. 9.* He had done no violence, no injustice or wrong to any one; he wrought no iniquity of any sort whatever; neither was guile found in his mouth; his words, as well as actions, were all sincere, just and right.

(2.) Patiently; when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when they blasphemed him, mocked him, called him foul names, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth; when they went further to real injuries, beating, buffeting, and crowning him with thorns, he threatened not; but committed both himself and his cause to God that judgeth righteously, who would in time clear his innocency, and avenge him on his enemies.

Learn, 1. Our blessed Redeemer was perfectly holy, and so free from sin that no temptation, no provocation whatsoever could extort from him so much as the least sinful or indecent word.

2. Provocations to sin, can never justify the commission of it; the rudeness, cruelty, and injustice of enemies, will not justify Christians in reviling and revenge; the reasons for sin can never be so great, but we have always stronger reasons to avoid it.

3. The judgment of God will determine justly upon every man, and every cause, and thither we ought, with patience and resignation to refer ourselves.

24. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Lest any should think, from what is said, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* that Christ's death was designed only for an example of patience under sufferings, the apostle here adds a more glorious design and effect of it; *who is our self, &c. where,*

Note, 1. The person suffering, Jesus Christ, *his own self, in his own body*; the expression, *his own self*, is emphatical, and necessary to shew, that he verified all the ancient prophecies, to distinguish him from the Levitical priests, who offered the blood of others, but he by himself purged our sins, *Heb. vii. 3.* and to exclude all others from participation with him in the work of man's redemption; it is added, *in his body*; not but that he suffered in his soul, *Matt. xxvi. 38.* but the sufferings of the soul were inward and concealed, when those of the body were visible, and more obvious to the consideration of these suffering servants, for whose sake this example is produced.

2. The

2. The sufferings he underwent, *were stripes, wounds, and death, the death of the cross*; servile and ignominious punishments!

3. The reason of his sufferings, *he bore our sins*: which teaches,

(1.) That Christ in his suffering stood charged with our sins, as one that had undertaken to put them away by the sacrifice of himself, 1st. liii. 6.

(2.) That he bore the punishment of them, and thereby satisfied divine justice.

(3.) That hereby *he takes away our sins*, and removes them away from us; as the scape-goat did typically bear the sins of the people on his head, and then carried them quite away, Lev. xvi. 21. so the Lamb of God does first bear our sins in his own body, and thereby take away the sin of the world, John i. 29.

(4.) The fruits of Christ's sufferings are, 1. Our sanctification, consisting of the death, the mortification of sin, and a new holy life of righteousness; for both which we have an example, and powerful motives and abilities also, from the death and resurrection of Christ. 2. Our justification; Christ was bruised and crucified as an expiatory sacrifice, and by his stripes we are healed.

Learn, 1. Jesus Christ bore all the sins of his people, and expiated them by his death upon the cross.

2. No man can depend safely upon Christ, as having bore his sin, and expiated his guilt, till he dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness.

25. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The apostle concludes his advice to Christian servants, putting them in mind of the difference between their former and present condition. They were as sheep going astray; which represents, 1. Man's sin, *he goes astray*; it is his own act, he is not driven, but does voluntarily go astray. 2. His misery, *he goes astray* from the pasture, from the shepherd, and from the flock, and so exposes himself to innumerable danger.

2. Here is the recovery of these by conversion; *but are now returned*: The word is passive, and shews, that the return of a sinner is the effect of divine grace: This return is, from all their errors and wanderings, to Christ, who is the true careful Shepherd that loves his sheep, and laid down his life for them; who is the most vigilant Pastor, and Bishop, or Overseer of souls.

Learn, 1. Sinners, before their conversion, are always going astray; their life is a continued error.

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who is always resident with his flock and watchful over them.

3. Those that expect the love and care of this universal Pastor, must return to him; must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

C H A P. III.

Wherein the apostle describes the duties of husbands and wives one to another, beginning with the duty of the wife, ver. 1—7. He exhorts Christians to unity, love, compassion, peace, and patience under sufferings; to oppose the slanders of their enemies, not by returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but by blessing; by a ready account of their faith and hope, and by keeping a good conscience, ver. 8—17. To encourage them to this, he propounds the example of Christ, who suffered, the just for the unjust, but yet punished the old world for their disobedience, and saved the few that were faithful in the days of Noah.

1. **L**IKewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives, 2. While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

The apostle having treated of the duties of subjects to their sovereigns, and of servants to their masters, he comes now to explain the duty of wives to their husbands, for fear the Christian matrons should imagine that their conversion to Christ, and their interest in all Christian privileges, did exempt them from subjection to their Pagan or Jewish husbands; the apostle here tells them, that the duty of wives consists,

(1.) In subjection, or a loving submission to the will, and obedience to the just authority, of their own husbands; which obliging carriage would be the most likely way to win those disobedient and unbelieving husbands, who had rejected the word, or who attended to no other evidence of the truth of it, but what they saw in the prudent, peaceable, and exemplary conversation of their wives.

(2.) In a chaste conversation, which their unbelieving husbands would accurately observe and attend to.

(3.) In fear, or reverence to their husbands, Eph. v. 33.

Learn, 1. Every distinct relation hath its particular duties, which ministers ought to preach, and the people ought to understand.

2. A cheerful subjection, and a loving, reverential respect, are duties which Christian women owe their husbands, whether they be good or bad; these were due from Eve to Adam before the fall, and are still required, though much more difficult now than they were before, Gen. iii. 16. 1 Tim. ii. 11.

3. Though the design of the word of the gospel is to win and gain souls to Jesus Christ, yet there are many so obstinate, that they will not be won by the word.

4. There is nothing more powerful, next to the word of God, to win people, than a good conversation, and the careful discharge of relative duties.

5. Irreligion and infidelity doth not dissolve the bonds, nor dispense with the duties of civil relations; the wife must discharge her duty to her own husband, though he obey not the word.

6. Evil men are strict observers of the conversation of the professors of religion; their curiosity, envy and jealousy, make them watch narrowly the ways and lives of good people.

7. A chaste conversation, attended with due and proper respect to every one, is an excellent means to win them to the faith of the gospel and obedience to the world.

5. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel:

This rule relates to the dress of religious women; here are three sorts of ornaments forbidden: *plaiting of hair*, which was commonly used in those

times by lewd women; *wearing of gold*, or ornaments made of gold, were practised by Rebecca, and Esther, and other religious women, but afterwards became the attire chiefly of whores and wicked people; *putting on of apparel* is not absolutely forbidden, but only too much curiosity and coarseness in apparel.

Learn, 1. Religious people should take care that all their external behaviour be answerable to their profession of Christianity; *they must be holy in all manner of conversation*.

2. The outward adorning of the body is very often sensual and excessive; for instance, when it is immoderate, and above your degree and station in the world; when you are proud of it, and puffed up with it; when you dress designing to allure, and tempt others; when your apparel is too rich, curious or superfluous; when your fashions are fantastical, imitating the levity and vanity of the worst people; and when they are immodest and wanton: *The attire of an harlot can never become a chaste Christian matron*.

4. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Instead of the outward adorning of the body, the Apostle directs Christian wives to put on much more excellent and beautiful ornaments; where,

Note, 1. The part to be adorned; *the hidden man of the heart*; that is, the soul; *the hidden, the inner man*: Take care to adorn and beautify your souls rather than your bodies.

2. The ornaments prescribed: It must, in general, be something not corruptible that beautifies the house, i. e. the graces and virtues of God's Holy Spirit; the ornaments of the body are destroyed by the moth, and perish in the using; but the grace of God, the longer we wear it the brighter and better it is: More especially, the finest ornament of Christian woman is a meek and quiet spirit; a tractable easy temper of mind, void of passion, pride and immoderate anger; discovering itself in a quiet, obliging behaviour towards their husbands and families: If the husband be harsh, and averse to religion which was the case with these good wives to whom the apostle gives this direction there is no way so likely to win him, as a prudent meek behaviour: However, a quiet spirit will make a good woman easy to herself, which being visible to others, becomes an amiable ornament to a person in the eyes of the world.

3. The excellency of it: *this meekness and calmness of spirit is in the sight of God of great price*; it is amiable in the sight of men, and precious in the sight of God.

Learn, 1. A true Christian's chief care lies in the right ordering and commanding of his own spirit; where the hypocrite's work ends, there the true Christian's work begins.

2. The endowments of the inner man are the chief ornaments of a Christian; but especially a composed, calm and quiet spirit, render either man or woman beautiful and lovely.

5. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; 6. Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

The duties of Christians wives being in their nature difficult, the apostle enforces them by the example.

1. Of the holy women of old, who trusted in God; you can pretend nothing of excuse from the weakness of your sex, but what they might; they lived in old time, and had less knowledge to inform them, and fewer examples to encourage them; yet in all ages they practised this duty; they trusted in God, and yet did not neglect their duty to man; the duties imposed upon you, of a quiet spirit, and of subjection to your own husbands, are not new but what have ever been practised by the greatest and best women in the world.

2. Of Sara, who obeyed her husband, and followed him when he went from Ur of the Chaldeans, not knowing whither he went, and called him lord, thereby shewing him reverence, and acknowledging his superiority over her; and all this, though she was declared a princess by God from heaven by the change of her name; whose daughters ye are, if you imitate her in faith and good works, and do not, through fear of your husbands, either quit the truth you profess or perform your duty to them, but readily perform it, without either fear or force, out of conscience towards God and sense of duty to them.

Learn, 1. God takes exact notice, and keeps an exact record of the actions and carriage of all men and women in the world.

2. The subjection of wives to their husbands, is a duty which hath been practised universally by holy women in all ages.

3. The greatest honour of any man or woman, lies in an humble and faithful deportment of themselves in the relation or condition in which providence hath placed them.

4. God takes notice of that good that is in his servants, to their honour and benefit, but covers a multitude of failings; Sara's infidelity and derision is overlooked, when her virtues are celebrated.

5. Christians ought to do their duty to one another, not out of fear, nor from force, but from a willing mind, and in obedience to the command of God, *wives should be in subjection to their churlish husbands*, not from dread and amazement, but from a desire to do well and to please God.

7. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

The husband's duty to the wife comes next to be considered, the particulars whereof are,

1. Cohabitation; which forbids unnecessary separation, and implies a mutual communication of goods and persons one to another, with delight and concord.

2. Dwelling with the wife according to knowledge; not according to lust, as brutes; not according to passion, as devils; but according to knowledge, as wise and sober men, that know the word of God, and their own duty.

3. Giving honour to the wife; giving due respect unto her, and maintaining her authority, protecting her person, supporting her credit, delighting in her conversation, affording her an handsome maintenance, and placing a due trust and confidence in her.

The reasons are, because she is *the weaker vessel* by nature and constitution, and so ought to be defended; but then the wife is, in other and higher respects, equal to her husband; they are *heirs together of the grace of life*, of all the blessings of this life and another; and therefore should live peaceably and quietly one with another; which, if they do not *their prayers* one with another, and one for another, will be hindered, so that often you will not pray at all, or if you do, you will pray with a discomposed ruffled mind, and so without success.

Learn, 1. The weakness of the female sex is no just reason either for separation or contempt, but on the contrary it is a reason for honour and respect; *giving honour to the wife as unto the weaker vessel*.

2. There is an honour due to all that are *heirs of the grace of life*.

3. All married people should take care to behave themselves so lovingly and peaceably one to another, that they may not by their broils hinder the success of their prayers.

8. Finally, *be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous*.

The apostle does here pass from special to more general exhortation; he advises Christians to *be all of one mind*, to be unanimous in the belief of the same faith, and practice of the same duties of religion; and whereas the Christians at that time were many of them in a suffering condition, therefore he charges them to *have compassion one of another, to love as brethren, to pity those that were in distress, and to be courteous to all*. Hence,

Learn, 1. Christians should endeavour to *be all of one mind* in the great points of faith, in real affection, and in Christian practice; they should be *like-minded one to another, according to Christ Jesus*, Rom. xv. 5. not according to man's pleasure, but God's word.

2. Though Christians cannot be exactly of the same mind, yet they should *have compassion one of another, and love as brethren*; they ought not to persecute or hate one another, but *love one another* with more than common affection; they should *love as brethren*.

3. Christianity requires *pity* to the distressed, and civility to all. He must be a flagrant sinner, or a vile apostate, that is not a proper object of civil courtesy, 1 Cor. v. 11. 2 John 10, 11.

9. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing: knowing that ye are there unto called that ye should inherit a blessing.

The former direction teacheth us how Christians and friends should treat one another, this verse instructs us how to behave towards enemies; the apostle knew that Christians would be *hated* and evil intreated *of all men for Christ's sake*; therefore he warns them not to return *evil for evil, or railing for railing*; but, on the contrary, when they rail at you, do you bless them; when they give you evil words, do you give them good ones: for Christ hath both by his word and example *called you to bless them that curse you*, and hath settled a blessing on you as your everlasting inheritance, though you were unworthy: To bear evils patiently, and to bless your enemies, is the way to obtain this blessing of God.

Learn, 1. To *render evil for evil, or railing for railing*, is a sinful, unchristian practice; the magistrate may punish *evil doers*, and private men may seek a legal remedy when they are wronged; but private revenge by duelling, scolding, or secret mischief, is forbidden, Prov. xx. 22. Luke vi. 27. Rom. xii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 15. To rail is to revile another in bitter, fierce and reproachful terms; but for ministers to rebuke sharply, and to preach earnestly against the sins of the times, is not railing; all the prophets and apostles practised it, Isa. lvi. 10. Zeph. iii. Acts xx. 29.

2. The laws of Christ oblige us to return blessing for railing, Matt. v. 44. *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you*. You must not justify them in their sin, but you must do for your enemies all that justice requires, or charity commands; we must, *pity, pray for, and love them that rail at us*.

3. A Christian's calling, as it invests him with glorious privileges, so it obligeth him to difficult duties.

4. All the true servants of God shall infallibly *inherit a blessing*; they have it already here in a great degree, but the full possession of it is reserved to another state and world.

10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. 11. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

We have here an excellent prescription for a comfortable happy life in this quarrelsome ill-natured world, taken from Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13, 14. If you earnestly desire that your life should be long, and your days peaceable and prosperous, keep your tongue from *reviling, evil-speaking and flandering*; and your lips from *lying, deceit, and dissimulation*; and avoid doing any real damage or hurt to your neighbour, but be ever ready to *do good, and to overcome evil with good; seek peace with all men, and pursue it*, though it retire from you; this will be the best way to dispose people to speak well of you, and live peaceably with you.

Learn, 1. That good people under the Old and New Testament were obliged to the same moral duties; to *refrain the tongue from evil, and the lips from guile*, was a duty in David's times as well as now.

2. It is lawful to consider temporal advantages as motives and encouragements to religion.

3. The practice of religion, particularly the right government of the tongue, is the best way to make this life comfortable and prosperous; a sincere, inoffensive, discreet tongue, is a singular means to pass us peaceably and comfortably through the world.

4. The avoiding of evil, and doing of good, is the way to contentment and happiness both here and hereafter.

5. It is the duty of Christians not only to embrace *peace* when it is offered, but to *seek and pursue it* when it is denied; *peace* with societies, and *peace* with particular persons, in opposition to division and contention, is what is here intended.

12. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

The allegation is continued from Psalm xxxiv. Christians need not fear that such patient inoffensive behaviour, as is prescribed, ver. 10, 11. will invite and encourage the cruelty of their enemies, for God will thereby be engaged on their side, *for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous*; he

taketh special notice of them, and exercises a providential constant government over them, and bears a special respect and affection to them; *his ears are open to their prayers*; so that if any injuries be offered to them, they have this remedy, they may complain of it to their heavenly Father, whose ears are always attentive to the prayers of his servants in their distresses, and who will certainly aid them against their unrighteous enemies; *but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*; his anger and displeasure and revenge will pursue them; for he is more an enemy to wicked persecutors than men are.

Learn, 1. That we must not in all cases adhere to the express words of scripture, but study the sense and meaning of them, otherwise we shall be led into blasphemous errors and absurdities; we must not imagine that God hath eyes, and ears and face, though these are the express words of the scripture.

2. God hath a special care and paternal affection towards all his righteous people.

3. God doth always hear the prayers of the faithful, John ix. 31. 1 John v. 14. Heb. iv. 16.

4. Though God is infinitely good, yet he abhorreth impenitent sinners, and will pour out his wrath upon *them that do evil*; he will do himself right, and do all the world justice; and his goodness is no obstruction to his doing so.

13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? 14. But if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

The patient, humble behaviour of Christians, recommended above, is here urged again from two considerations: 1. This will be the best and surest way to prevent suffering; for *who is he that will harm you?* This, I suppose, is spoken of Christians in an ordinary condition, not in the heat of persecution; ordinarily there will be but few so diabolical and impious as to harm them that live so innocently and usefully as you do. This is the way to improve sufferings; *if you be followers of that which is good, and yet suffer, this is suffering for righteousness sake*; and that will be your glory and your happiness, as it entitles you to the blessing promised by Christ, Matt. v. 10. therefore you need not be afraid of any thing they can do to strike you with terror, neither be much troubled or concerned about the rage or force of your enemies.

Learn, 1. To follow always *that which is good*, is the best course we can take to keep out of harm's way.

2. To *suffer for righteousness sake* is the honour and happiness of a Christian; to suffer for the cause of truth, a good conscience, or any part of a Christian's duty, is a great honour; the delight of it is greater than the torment, the honour more than the disgrace, and the gain much greater than the loss.

3. Christians have no reason to be afraid of the threats or rage of any of their enemies; your enemies are God's enemies, *his face is against them*, his power is above them, they are the objects of his curse, and can do nothing to you but by his permission, therefore trouble not yourselves about them.

15. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Instead of terrifying yourselves with the fear of men, be sure to *sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, Isa. viii. 12, 13. *Fear not them that can only kill the body, but fear him that can destroy body and soul*, Luke xii. 4.

We *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts*, when we with sincerity and fervency adore him; when our thoughts of him are awful and reverend; when we rely upon his power, trust to his faithfulness, submit to his wisdom, imitate his holiness, and give him the glory due to his most illustrious perfections: We sanctify God before others, when our deportment is such, as invites and encourages others to glorify and honour him; both are required, Lev. x. 3. When this principle is laid deep into your hearts, the next thing, as to men, is to *be always ready*, that is, able and willing, to *give an answer, or make an apology or defence of the faith you profess, and that to every man that asketh a reason of your hope*, what sort of hope you have for which you suffer such hardships in the world.

Learn, 1. An awful sense of the divine perfections is the best antidote against the fear of sufferings; did we fear God more, we should certainly fear men less.

2. That *the hope* and faith of a Christian is defensible against all the world; there may be a good reason given for religion, it is not a fancy, but a rational scheme revealed from heaven, suited to all the necessities of miserable sinners, and centering entirely in the glory of God through Jesus Christ.

3. Every Christian is bound to answer and apologize for *the hope that is in him*; Christians should have a *reason* ready for their Christianity, that it may appear they are not acted either by folly or fancy; this defence may be necessary more than once or twice, so that Christians should be always prepared to make it, either to the magistrate, if he demand it, or to any inquisitive serious Christian that desires to know it for his information or improvement.

4. These confessions of our faith ought to be made with *meekness and fear*; apologies for our religion ought to be made with modesty and meekness, in the fear of God, with jealousy over ourselves, and reverence to our superiors.

16. Having a good conscience: that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

The confession of a Christian's faith cannot credibly be supported but by the two means here specified, *a good conscience*, and *a good conversation*; *Conscience* is good when it does its office well, when it is kept pure and uncorrupt, and clear from guilt, then it will justify you, though men *accuse you*: *A good conversation in Christ* is a holy life, according to the doctrine and example of Christ; look well to your conscience, and to your conversation; and then, though men *speak evil of you, and falsely accuse you as evil-doers*, you will clear yourselves, and bring them to shame: Perhaps you may think it hard to suffer for well-doing, for keeping a good conscience, and a good conversation; but be not discouraged; for it is better for you, though worse for your enemies, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

Learn

Learn, 1. That the most conscientious persons cannot escape the censures and frowns of evil men; they will *speake evil of them, as of evil-doers*, and charge them with crimes which their very souls abhor; Christ and his apostles were so used.

2. A good conscience, and a good conversation are the best means to secure a good name; these give a solid reputation, and a lasting one.

3. False accusations generally turn to the accuser's shame, by discovering at last the accuser's indiscretion, injustice, falsehood and uncharitableness.

4. It is sometimes the will of God that good people should *suffer for well-doing*, for their honesty and for their faith.

6. As *well-doing* does sometimes expose a good man to suffering, so *evil-doing* will not exempt an evil man from it: The apostle supposeth here that a man may suffer for both: if the sufferings of good people *for well-doing* be so severe, what will the sufferings of wicked people be *for evil-doing*? It is a sad condition that person is in upon whom sin and suffering meet together at the same time; sin makes sufferings to be extreme, unprofitable, comfortless, and destructive.

18. For Christ has also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, (that he might bring us to God) being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

The example of Christ is here proposed as an argument for patience under sufferings, the strength of which will be discerned, if we consider the several points contained in the words; observe here,

1. Jesus Christ himself was not exempted from sufferings in this life, though he had no guilt of his own, and could have declined all suffering if he had pleased.

2. The reason or meritorious cause of Christ's suffering was the sins of men; *Christ suffered for sins*: The sufferings of Christ were a true and proper punishment; this punishment was suffered to expiate, and to make an atonement for sin; and it does extend to all sins.

3. In the case of our Lord's suffering, it was *the just* that suffered *for the unjust*; he substituted himself in our room and stead, and bore our iniquities; he that knew no sin, suffered instead of them that knew no righteousness.

4. The merit and perfection of *Christ's sacrifice* was such, that for him to suffer once was enough; the legal sacrifices were repeated from day to day, and from year to year; but *the sacrifice of Christ once offered, purgeth away sin*, Heb. vii. 27.—ix. 26—28.—x. 10—12—14.

5. The blessed end and design of our Lord's sufferings were to *bring us to God, to reconcile us to God*, to give us access to the Father, to render us and our services acceptable, and to bring us to eternal glory, Eph. ii. 13.—18.—iii. 12. Heb. x. 21, 22.

6. The issue and event of *Christ's sufferings*, as to himself, was this, he was *put to death* in his human nature, but he was *quickened* and raised again by the Spirit.

Now if Christ was not exempt from sufferings, why should Christians expect it? If he suffered to expiate sin, why should not we be content when our sufferings are only for trial and correction, but not for expiation? If he, though perfectly just, why should not we who are all criminals? If he once suffered, and then entered into glory, shall not we be patient under trouble, since it will be but a little time and we shall follow him to glory? If he suffered to bring us to God, shall we not submit to difficulties, since they are of so much use to quicken us in our return to God, and in the performance of our duty to him?

19. By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20. Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water.

Here the apostle passeth from the example of Christ to that of the old world, and sets before the Jews, to whom he wrote, the different event of them that believed and obeyed Christ preaching by Noah, from them that continued disobedient and unbelieving, intimating to the Jews, that they were under a like sentence; God would not wait much longer upon them, they had now an offer of mercy; those that accepted of it should be saved, but those that rejected Christ and the gospel should be as certainly destroyed, as ever the disobedient in the times of Noah were.

Observe here, 1. The preacher, Christ Jesus, who interested himself in the affairs of the church and of the world, ever since he was first promised to Adam, Gen. iii. 15. *He went*, not by a local motion but by special operation, and God is frequently said to move, Gen. iv. 5. Mich. i. 3. *Hef. v. 15. He went and preached*, by his Spirit striving with them, and inspiring and enabling Enoch and Noah to plead with them, and *preach righteousness to them*, as 2 Pet. ii. 5.

2. The hearers, who, because they were dead and disembodied when the apostle speaks of them, therefore he properly calls them *spirits now in prison*; not that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as the vulgar Latin translation and the Popish expositors pretend.

3. The sin of these people; they were *disobedient*, that is, *rebellious, unpersuadable, and unbelieving*, as the word signifies; this their sin is aggravated from the patience and long-suffering of God, which once waited upon them 120 years together, *while Noah was preparing the ark*, and by that, as well as by his preaching, giving them fair warning of what was coming upon them.

4. The event of all; their bodies were drowned, and their spirits cast into hell, which is called a *prison*, Matt. v. 25. 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5. but Noah and his family that believed and were obedient, *were saved in the ark*.

Learn, 4. That God takes exact notice of all the means and advantages that people of all ages have had for the salvation of their souls; it is put to the account of the old world, that Christ offered them his help, sent his Spirit, gave them fair warning by Noah, and waited a long time for their amendment.

2. Though the patience of God wait long upon sinners, yet it will expire at last; it is beneath the majesty of the great God always to wait upon man in vain.

4. The spirit of disobedient sinners, as soon as they are out of their bodies, are committed to the prison of hell, from whence there is no redemption.

4. The way of the most is neither the best, the wisest, nor the safest way to follow; better to follow the *eight in the ark*, than the eight millions drowned by the flood and damned to hell.

21. The like figure, whereunto even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Noah's salvation in the ark upon the water, did prefigure the salvation of all good Christians in the church by baptism; that temporal salvation by the ark was a type, the antitype whereunto is the eternal salvation of believers by baptism; to prevent mistakes about which, the apostle does, 1. Declare what he means by saving baptism, not the outward ceremony of washing with water, which, in itself, does no more than put away the *filth of the flesh*, but it is that baptism wherein there is a faithful answer or stipulation of a resolved good conscience, engaging to believe in, and be entirely devoted to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, renouncing at the same time the flesh, the world, and the devil. The baptismal covenant made and kept will certainly save us. Washing is the visible sign; this is the thing signified. 2. The apostle shews that the efficacy of baptism to salvation depends not upon the work done, but upon the resurrection of Christ; which supposeth his death, and is the foundation of our faith and hope, to which we are rendered conformable by dying to sin, and rising again to holiness and newness of life.

Learn, 1. That the sacrament of baptism rightly received is a means and a pledge of salvation. *Baptism now saveth us*. God is pleased to convey his blessings to us in and by his ordinances, Acts ii. 38.—chap. xxii. 16.

2. The external participation of baptism will save no man without an answerable good conscience and conversation. There must be the *answer of a good conscience towards God*. *Obj.* Infants cannot make such an answer, and therefore ought not to be baptized. *Ans.* The true circumcision was that of the heart and of the spirit, Rom. ii. 28. which children were no more capable of then, than our infants are capable of making this answer now; yet they were allowed circumcision at eight days old. The infants of the Christian church therefore may be admitted to the ordinance with as much reason as the infants of the Jewish, unless they are barred from it by some express prohibition of Christ.

22. Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

The apostle having mentioned the death of Christ, ver. 18. and his resurrection, ver. 21. he proceeds to speak of his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of the Father, as a subject fit to be considered by these believers for their comfort in their suffering condition. If the advancement of Christ was so glorious after his deep humiliation, let not his followers despair, but expect that after these short distresses they shall be advanced to transcendent joy and glory.

Learn, 1. That Jesus Christ after he had finished his labours and his sufferings upon earth, did ascend triumphantly into heaven, of which see Acts i. 9, 10, 11. Mark xvi. 19. He went to heaven to receive his own acquired crown and glory, John xvii. 5. to finish that part of his mediatorial work which could not be done on earth, and make intercession for his people; to demonstrate the fulness of his satisfaction; to take possession of heaven for his people, and prepare mansions for them, and to send down the Comforter, which was to be the first-fruits of his intercession, John xvi. 7.

2. Upon his ascension into heaven Christ is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. His being said to sit there imports absolute rest and cessation from all farther troubles and sufferings, and an advancement to the highest personal dignity and sovereign power.

3. That angels, authorities and powers are all made subject to Christ Jesus, *all power in heaven and earth*, to command, to give law, issue orders, and pronounce a final sentence, is committed to Jesus, God-man, which his enemies will find to their everlasting sorrow and confusion, but his servants to their eternal joy and satisfaction.

C H A P. IV.

The work of a Christian is twofold, doing the will of God, and suffering his pleasure. This chapter directs us in both. The duties we are here exhorted to employ ourselves in are the mortification of sin, living to God, sobriety, prayer, charity, hospitality, and the best improvement of our talents, which the apostle presseth upon Christians from the consideration of the time they have left in their sins, and the approaching end of all things, ver. 1—12. The directions for sufferings are, that we should not be surprised at them, but rejoice in them, only take care not to suffer as evil doers. He intimates, that their trials were near at hand, that their souls were in danger as well as their bodies, and the best way to preserve their souls, is to commit them to God in well doing.

1. FORASMUCH then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin:

The apostle here draws a new inference from the consideration of Christ's sufferings. As he had before made use of it to persuade to patience in suffering, so here to mortification of sin. The antecedent or supposition is, that *Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh*, or in his human nature. The consequent or inference is, arm and fortify yourselves likewise with the same mind, courage and resolution. The word *flesh* in the former part of the verse signifies Christ's human nature, but in the latter part it signifies man's corrupt nature. So the sense is, as Christ suffered in his human nature, do you, according to your baptismal vow and profession, make your corrupt nature suffer, by putting to death the body of sin by self-denial and mortification; for if you do thus suffer in the flesh, or make the flesh suffer, you will be conformable to Christ in his death and resurrection, and will *cease from sin*.

Learn, 1. Some of the strongest and best arguments against all sorts of sin are taken from the sufferings of Christ. All sympathy and tenderness for Christ as a sufferer is lost if you do not put away sin. He died to destroy it; and though he could cheerfully submit to the worst sufferings, yet he could never submit to the least sin.

2. The beginning of all true mortification lies in the mind. Not in penances and hardships upon the body. The mind of man is carnal, full of enmity; the understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18. Man is not a sincere creature, but partial, blind, and wicked, till he be renewed and sanctified by the regenerating grace of God.

2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Here the apostle explains what he means by being dead to sin, and ceasing from sin. Negatively, a Christian ought no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh; to the sinful lusts and corrupt desires of carnal wicked men;

men; but positively, he ought to conform himself to the revealed will of the holy God.

Learn, 1. The lusts of men are the springs of all their wickedness, *James i. 13.* Let occasional temptations be what they will, they could not prevail, were it not for men's own corruptions.

2. All good Christians make the will of God, not their own lusts or desires, the rule of their lives and actions.

3. True conversion makes a marvellous change in the heart and life of every one that partakes of it. It brings a man off from all his old, fashionable and delightful lusts, and from the common ways and vices of the world, to the will of God. It alters the mind, judgment, affections, way and conversation of every one that hath experienced it.

3. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Here the apostle argues from equity. It is but just, equal, and reasonable, that as you have hitherto all the former part of your life served sin and Satan, so you should now serve the living God. Though these were Jews to whom the apostle writes, yet living among the Gentiles, they had learned their way.

Learn, 1. When a man is truly converted, it is very grievous to him to think how the time past of his life has been spent; the hazard he hath run so many years; the mischief he hath done to others; the dishonour done to God, and the loss he hath sustained, are very afflictive to him.

2. Whilst the will of man is un sanctified and corrupt, he walks continually in wicked ways; he makes them his choice and delight, his work and business, and he makes a bad condition daily worse and worse.

3. One sin allowed draws on another. Here are six named, and they have a connection and dependence one upon another. 1. *Lasciviousness* or wantonness, expressed in looks, gesture or behaviour, *Rom. xiii. 13.* 2. *Lust*, acts of lewdness, such as whoredom and adultery. 3. *Excess of wine*, though short of drunkenness, an immoderate use of it, to the prejudice of health or business, is here condemned. 4. *Revellings*, or luxurious feastings, too frequent, too full, or too expensive. 5. *Banquetings*, by which is meant gluttony, or excess in eating. 6. *Abominable idolatry*, the idol worship of the Gentiles was attended with lewdness, drunkenness, gluttony, and all sorts of brutality and cruelty; and these Jews living long amongst them were, some of them at least, debauched and corrupted by such practices.

It is a Christian's duty not only to abstain from what is grossly wicked, but also from those things that are generally the occasions of sin, or carry the appearance of evil. *Excess of wine* and immoderate feasting is forbidden as well as lust and idolatry.

4. Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

Here you have the visible change wrought in those, who in the foregoing verse were represented as having been in the former part of their life very wicked, they no longer run on in the same courses, or with the same companions, as they used to do. Hereupon observe the carriage of their wicked acquaintance towards them.

1. They think it strange, they are surprised and wonder at it, as at something new and unusual, that their old friends should be so much altered, and not run with as much violence as they used to do to the same excess of riot, to the same sordid excesses and luxury, which before they had greedily and madly followed.

2. *They speak evil of them.* Their surprise carries them to blasphemy. They speak evil of their persons, of their way, their religion, and their God.

Learn, 1. They that are once really converted, will not return to their former course of life, though never so much tempted by the frowns of flatteries of others to do so. Neither persuasions nor reproach will prevail with them to be or do as they were wont to do.

2. The temper and behaviour of true Christians seem very strange to ungodly men. That they should despise that which every one else is fond of. That they should believe many things which to others seem incredible: that they should delight in what is irksome and tedious, and that they should depend so much upon hope.

3. The best actions of religious people cannot escape the censures and slanders of them that are irreligious. Those actions which cost a good man the most pains, hazard, and self-denial, shall be most censured by the uncharitable and ill-natured world; they will speak evil of good people, though they themselves reap the fruits of their charity, piety and goodness.

5. Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

For the comfort of the servants of God it is here added, that all wicked people, especially those that speak evil of them that are not as bad as themselves, shall give an account, and be put to give a reason of their behaviour to him that is ready to judge; that is, both able and duly authorised, and that will ere long judge and pass sentence upon all that shall then be found alive, and all such as being dead shall then be raised again, *James v. 8, 9.* 2 *Pet. iii. 9.*

Learn, That the malignant world shall in a little time give an account to the great God of all their evil speeches against his people, *Jude 14, 15.* They will soon be called to a sad account for all their curses, their foolish jests, their slanders and falsehoods uttered against the faithful people of God.

5 For, for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.

Some understand this difficult place thus: *For this cause was the gospel preached* to all the faithful of old, that are now dead in Christ, that thereby they might be taught and encouraged to bear the unrighteous judgments and persecutions which the rage of men did put upon them *in the flesh*, but might be judged according to men in the flesh. In a spiritual sense thus: The gospel was preached to them, to judge them, condemn them, and reprove them for the corruption of their natures, and the viciousness of their lives; which they lived after the manner of the heathen, or the mere natural man; and that having thus mortified their sins, they might live according to God a new and spiritual life. Take it thus; and thence,

Learn, 1. That the mortifying our sins and living to God, are the expected effects of the gospel preached unto us.

2. That God will certainly reckon with all those that have had the gospel preached unto them, but without these good effects produced by it; God is ready to judge all those that have received his gospel in vain.

3. It is no matter how we are judged according to men in the flesh, if we do but live according to God in the Spirit.

7. But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

We have here an awful position or doctrine, and an inference drawn from it. The position is, that the end of all things is at hand. The miserable destruction of the Jewish church and nation, foretold by our Saviour, is now very near; consequently the time of their persecution and your sufferings is but very short. Your own life and that of your enemies will soon come to their utmost period. Nay, the world itself will not continue very long. The conflagration will put an end to it; and all things must be swallowed up in an endless eternity. The inference from this is, *be ye therefore sober.* Let the frame and temper of your minds be grave, stayed and solid; and observe strict temperance and sobriety in the use of all worldly enjoyments. Do not suffer yourselves to be caught with your former sins and temptations, ver. 3, *And watch unto prayer.* Take care that you be continually in a calm, sober disposition, fit for prayer; and that you be frequent in prayers, lest this end come upon you unawares, *Luke xxi. 34. Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.*

Learn, 1. The consideration of our approaching end is a powerful argument to make us sober in all worldly matters, and earnest in religious affairs.

2. They that would pray to purpose, must watch unto prayer. They must watch over their own spirits, and watch all fit opportunities, and do their duty in the best manner they can.

3. The right ordering of the body is of great use to promote the good of the soul. When the appetites and inclinations of the body are restrained and governed by God's word and true reason; and the interests of the body are submitted to the interests and necessities of the soul; then it is not the soul's enemy, but its friend and helper.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Here is a noble rule in Christianity. The grace recommended is *charity, among yourselves.* Christians ought to love one another; which implies an affection to their persons, a desire of their welfare, and an hearty endeavour to promote it. The degree of this mutual affection is, it must not be cold, but fervent, that is, sincere, strong, and lasting. This sort of earnest affection is recommended above all things; which shews the importance of it. *Col. iii. 14.* It is greater than faith or hope, *1 Cor. xiii. 13.* One excellent effect of it is, that it will cover a multitude of sins.

Learn, 1. There ought to be in all Christians a more fervent charity towards one another, than towards other men. Have charity among yourselves. He does not say for pagans, for idolaters, or for apostates, but among yourselves. Let brotherly love continue, *Heb. xiii. 1.* There is a special relation between all sincere Christians, and a particular amableness and good in them, which requires special affection.

2. It is not enough for Christians not to bear malice, or to have common respect for one another, they must intensely and fervently love each other.

3. It is the property of true charity to cover a multitude of sins. It inclines people to forgive and forget offences against themselves; to cover and conceal the sins of others, rather than aggravate them and spread them abroad. It teaches us to love them that are but weak, and that have been guilty of many evil things before their conversion; and it prepares for mercy at the hand of God, who had promised to forgive them that forgive others. *Matt. vi. 15.*

9. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

The hospitality here required is a free and kind entertainment of strangers and travellers. The proper objects of a Christian's hospitality are one another. The nearness of their relation, and the necessity of their condition in those times of persecution and distress, did oblige Christians to be hospitable one to another. Sometimes Christians were spoiled of all they had, and were driven away to distant countries for safety. In this case they must starve, if their fellow Christians would not receive them. Therefore it was a wise and necessary rule which the apostle here laid down. It is elsewhere commanded, *Heb. xiii. 1 Rom. xii. 13.* The manner of performing this duty is this; it must be done in an easy, kind, handsome manner, without grudging or grumbling at the expence or trouble.

Learn, 1. That Christians ought not only to be charitable, but hospitable one to another.

2. Whatever a Christian does by way of charity or of hospitality, he ought to do it cheerfully and without grudging: Freely you have received, freely give.

10. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Here the apostle gives directions about the improvement of talents. The rule is, that whatever gift, ordinary or extraordinary; whatever power, ability or capacity of doing good is given to us, we should minister or do service with the same one to another; accounting ourselves not masters, but only stewards of manifold grace, of the various gifts of God.

Learn, 1. Whatever ability we have of doing good, we must own it to be the gift of God and ascribe it to his grace.

2. Whatever gifts we have received, we ought to look upon them as received for the use of another. We must not assume them to ourselves, or hide them in a napkin, but do service with them one to another in the best manner we are able.

3. In receiving and using the manifold gifts of God, we must look upon ourselves as stewards only, and act accordingly. The talents we are intrusted with are our Lord's goods, and must be employed as he directs. And it is required in a steward that he be found faithful.

11. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The apostle exemplifies his direction about gifts in two particulars, speaking and ministering. Concerning which, he gives these rules. 1. *If any man*, whether a minister in public or a Christian in private conference, do speak or teach, he must do it *as the oracles of God*; which direct us to the matter of our speech. What Christians in private, or ministers in public teach and speak, must be the pure word and *oracles of God*. As to the manner of speaking, it must be with that seriousness, reverence, and solemnity that becomes those holy and divine oracles. 2. *If any man minister*, either as a deacon distributing the alms of the church, and taking care of the poor, or as a private person, by charitable gifts and contributions, *let him do it as of the ability which God giveth*. He that hath received plenty and ability from God ought to minister plentifully, and according to his ability. These rules ought to be followed and practised for this end; *that God in all things*, in all your gifts, ministrations and services may be glorified. *That others may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Mat. v. 19. *Through Jesus Christ*, who hath procured and given these gifts to men, Eph. iv. 8. and through whom alone, we and our services are accepted of God, Heb. xiii. 15. *To which Jesus Christ be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Learn, 1. It is the duty of Christians in private, as well as ministers in public, to speak to one another of the things of God, Mal. iii. 16. Eph. iv. 29. Psalm cxlv. 10, 11, 12.

2. It highly concerns all preachers of the gospel to keep close to the word of God, and to treat that word as becomes *the oracles of God*.

3. Christians must not only do the duties of their place, but they must do it with vigour, and according to *the best of their abilities*. The nature of a Christian's work, which is high work and hard work, the goodness and kindness of the Master, and the excellency of the reward, do all require, that our endeavours should be serious and vigorous: and that whatever we are called to do for the honour of God and the good of others, we should do it with all our might.

4. In all the duties and services of life, we should aim at the glory of God as our chief end; all other views must be subservient to that, which would sanctify our common actions and affairs, 1 Cor. x. 31.

5. God is not glorified by any thing we do, if we do not offer it to him through the mediation and merits of Jesus Christ, *God in all things must be glorified through Jesus Christ*, who is the only way to the Father.

6. The apostle's adoration of Jesus Christ, and ascribing unlimited and everlasting praise and dominion to him, proves that Jesus Christ is the most high God over all blessed for evermore. Amen.

12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you; as though some strange thing happened unto you. 13. But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

The frequent repetition of counsel and comforts to Christians, considered as sufferers, in every chapter of this epistle, sheweth, that the greatest danger these new converts were in, arose from the persecutions to which their embracing Christianity did expose them. The good behaviour of Christians under sufferings, is the most difficult part of their duty, but yet necessary both for the honour of Christ and their own comfort; and therefore the apostle having exhorted them in the former part of this chapter to the great duty of mortification, does here come to direct them in the necessary duty of patience under suffering. An unmortified spirit is very unfit to bear trials.

Observe, 1. The apostle's kind manner of address to these poor despised Christians. They were his beloved.

2. His advice to them, relating to their sufferings, which is, that they should not think them strange, nor be surprised at them, as if some unexpected event befel them; for though they be sharp, and fiery, yet they are designed only to try, not to ruin them; to try their sincerity, strength, patience, and trust in God.

On the contrary, they ought rather to rejoice under their sufferings, because theirs may properly be called Christ's sufferings. They are of the same kind, and for the same cause that Christ suffered; they make us conformable to him; he suffers in them, and feels our infirmities; and if we be partakers of his sufferings, we shall also be made *partakers of his glory*; and shall meet him with exceeding joy at his great appearing to judge his enemies, and crown his faithful servants, 2 Thess. i. 7.

Learn, 1. True Christians do love and own the children of God in their lowest and most distressing circumstances. The apostle owns these poor afflicted Christians, and calls them his beloved. True Christians never look more amiable one to another than in their adversities.

2. There is no reason for Christians to think strange, or to wonder at the unkindnesses and persecutions of the world, because they are forewarned of them. Christ himself endured them; and the forsaking all, denying ourselves, and bearing the cross, are the terms upon which Christ accepts of us to be his disciples.

3. Christians ought not only to be patient, but rejoice in their sharpest and fiercest sufferings for Christ, because they are tokens of divine favour; they promote the gospel, and prepare for glory. They that rejoice in their sufferings for Christ, shall eternally triumph and rejoice with him in glory.

14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

From the fiery trial, the apostle descends to a lower degree of persecution: that of the tongue by slander and reproach. He supposeth this sort of suffering would fall to their lot: They would be reviled, evil spoken of, and slandered for the name or sake of Christ. In such case he asserts, *happy are ye*. The reason of which is, because ye have the Spirit of God with you to fortify and comfort you; and the Spirit of God is also the Spirit of glory, that will carry you through all, and bring you off gloriously, and will prepare and seal you up for eternal glory. This glorious Spirit *resteth upon you*, residing with you, dwelleth in you, supporteth you, and is pleased with you; and is not this a mighty happiness? By your patience and fortitude in suffering, by your dependence upon the promises of God, and adhering to the word which the holy Spirit hath revealed, *he is on your part glorified*; but by the contempt and reproaches cast upon you *the Spirit itself is evil spoken of and blasphemed*.

Learn, 1. The best men and the best things do usually meet with reproaches in the world. Jesus Christ and his followers, the Spirit of God, and the gospel, are all evil spoken of.

2. The happiness of good people does not only consist with, but even flow from their afflictions. *Happy are ye*.

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3. That man that hath the spirit of God resting upon him, cannot be miserable, let his afflictions be never so great. *Happy are ye: for the Spirit of God, &c.*

4. The blasphemies and reproaches which evil men cast upon good people, are taken by the Spirit of God as cast upon himself. *On their part he is evil spoken of*.

5. When good people are vilified for the name of Christ, his holy Spirit is glorified in them.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or a busy-body in other mens matters. 15. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

One would think such a caution as this needless, to such an excellent set of Christians as these were. But their enemies did charge them with these and other foul crimes: Therefore the apostle, when he was settling the rules of the Christian religion, thought these cautions necessary, forbidding to every one of them to hurt the life or the estate and property of any one, or to do any sort of evil, or without call and necessity to play the *bishop in another man's charge*, or busy one's self in *other men's matters*. To this caution he adds a direction, *that if any man suffer for the cause of Christianity*, and with a patient Christian spirit, he ought not to account it a shame, but an honour to him; and ought to glorify God who hath thus dignified him.

Learn, 1. The best of men need to be warned against the worst of sins.

2. There is very little comfort in sufferings when we bring them upon ourselves by our own sin and folly. It is not the suffering, but the cause, makes the martyr.

3. We have reason to thank God for the honour, if he calls us out to suffer for his truth and gospel; for any of the doctrines or duties of Christianity.

17. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

The usual method of providence hath been this: When God brings great calamities and sore judgments upon whole nations, he generally begins with his own people, Isa. x. 12. Jer. xxv. 29. Ezek. ix. 6. Such a time of universal calamity is now at hand, which was foretold by our Saviour, Matt. xxiv. 9, 10. This renders all the foregoing exhortations to patience necessary for you. And you have two considerations to support you. 1. That these judgments will but begin with you that are God's house and family, and will soon be over: Your trials and corrections will not last long. 2. Your troubles will be but light and short in comparison of what shall befall the wicked world; your own countrymen the Jews, and the infidels and idolatrous people among which you live. *What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Learn, 1. The best of God's servants, his own household, have so much sin in them, as renders it fit and necessary that God should sometimes correct and punish them with his judgment. *Judgment begins at the House of God*.

2. They that are the family of God have their worst things in this life. Their worst condition is tolerable, and will soon be over.

3. Such persons or societies of men as *disobey the gospel of God*, are not of his church and household: though possibly they may make the loudest pretensions to it. The apostle distinguisheth the disobedient from the house of God.

4. The sufferings of good people in this life, are demonstrations of the unspeakable torments that are coming upon the disobedient and unbelieving. *What shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel?* Who can express or say how dreadful their end will be?

18. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

This whole verse is taken from Prov. xi. 31. *Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner?* This the LXX translate exactly as the apostle here quotes them? Whence we may learn, 1. That the grievous sufferings of good people in this world are but prefiges of much heavier judgments coming upon impenitent sinners. But, if we take the salvation here in the highest sense, then we may learn, 2. That it is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls; there are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome; so many sins to be mortified; the gate is so strait, and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider, your difficulties are greatest at first; God offers his grace and help; the contest will not last long: Be but faithful to the death, and *God will give you the crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10. The ungodly and the sinner are unquestionably in a state of damnation. *Where shall they appear?* How will they stand before their Judge? Where can they shew their heads? *If the righteous scarcely be saved*, the wicked must certainly perish.

19. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.

Here the apostle finisheth his discourse concerning sufferings, and gives this general advice: *Let them that suffer according to the will of God*, look chiefly to the safety of their souls, which are put into hazard by affliction, and cannot be kept secure otherwise than by committing them to God, who will undertake the charge, if we commit them to him in well-doing: for he is their creator, and hath out of mere grace made many kind promises to them of eternal salvation, in which he will shew himself faithful and true.

Learn, 1. That all the sufferings that befall good people come upon them according to the will of God.

2. It is the duty of Christians, in all their distresses, to look more to the keeping of their souls, than to the preserving of their bodies. The soul is of greatest value, and yet in most danger. If suffering from without raise uneasiness, vexation, and other sinful and tormenting passions within, the soul is then the greatest sufferer. If the soul be not well kept, persecution will drive people to apostasy, Psalm cxxv. 3.

3. The only way to keep the soul well, is to commit it to God in well-doing. Commit your souls to God by solemn dedication, prayer, and patient perseverance in well-doing, Rom. ii. 7.

4. Good people when they are in affliction, have great encouragement to commit their souls to God, because he is their creator, and faithful in all his promises.

C H A P. V.

In which the apostle gives particular directions, first to the elders, how to behave themselves towards their flock, in the four first verses; then to the younger, to be obedient and humble, and to cast their care upon God, in the three next verses. From thence to the end he exhorts all to sobriety, watchfulness against temptations, and steadfastness in the faith, praying earnestly for them; and so concludes his epistle with a solemn doxology, mutual salutations, and his apostolical benediction.

1. **T**HE elders which are among you I exhort, who I am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

Here we may observe, 1. The persons to whom this exhortation is given. To the presbyters, pastors, and spiritual guides of the church; elders by office, rather than by age, ministers of those churches to whom he wrote this epistle. 2. The person who gives this exhortation, the apostle Peter, I exhort; and to give force to this exhortation, he tells them he was their brother-presbyter or fellow-elder; and so puts nothing upon them but what he was ready to perform himself. He was also a witness of the sufferings of Christ, being with him in the garden, attending him to the palace of the high-priest, and very likely was a spectator of his suffering upon the cross at a distance among the crowd, Acts iii. 15. He adds, that he was also a partaker of the glory that was in some degree revealed at the transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 1, 2, 3. and shall be completely enjoyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Learn, 1. They whose office it is to teach others, ought carefully to study their own duty, as well as teach the people theirs.

2. How different the spirit and behaviour of Peter was from that of his pretended successors. He does not command and domineer, but exhort. He does not claim sovereignty over all pastors and churches, nor stile himself prince of the apostles, vicar of Christ, or head of the church, but values himself upon being an elder. All the apostles were elders, though every elder was not an apostle.

3. It was the peculiar honour of Peter, and a few more, to be the witnesses of Christ's sufferings; but it is the privilege of all true Christians to be partakers of the glory that shall be revealed.

2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Here you have the pastor's duty described, and the manner how that duty ought to be performed. The pastoral duty is threefold. 1. To feed the flock, by preaching to them the sincere word of God, and ruling them according to such directions and discipline as the word of God prescribes. Both which are implied in this expression, feed the flock. 2. The pastors of the church must take the oversight thereof. The elders are exhorted to do the office of bishops, as the word signifies, by personal care and vigilance over all the flock committed to their charge. 3. They must be examples to the flock, and practise that holiness, self-denial, mortification, and all other Christian duties which they preach and recommend to their people.

These duties must be performed not by constraint, not because you must do them, not from compulsion of the civil power, or constraint for fear of shame, but from a willing mind that takes pleasure in the work. Not for filthy lucre, or any emoluments and profits attending the place where you reside, or any perquisite belonging to the office, but of a ready mind; regarding the flock more than the fleece, sincerely and cheerfully endeavouring to serve the church of God. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, tyrannizing over them by compulsion and coercive force, or imposing unscriptural and human inventions upon them instead of necessary duty, Matt. xx. 25, 26. 2 Cor. i. 24.

Learn, 1. The eminent dignity of the church of God, and all the true members of it. These poor, dispersed, suffering Christians were the flock of God. The rest of the world is a brutal herd. These are an orderly flock redeemed to God by the great Shepherd, living in holy love and communion one with another, according to the will of God. They are also dignified with the title of God's heritage or clergy. His peculiar lot, chosen out of the common multitude for his own people, to enjoy his special favour, and to do him special service. The word is never restrained in the New Testament to the ministers of religion only.

2. The pastors of the church ought to consider their people as the flock of God, as God's heritage, and treat them accordingly. They are not theirs to be lorded over at pleasure, but they are God's people, and should be treated with love, meekness, and tenderness, for the sake of him to whom they belong.

3. Those ministers that are either driven to the work by necessity, or drawn to it by filthy lucre, can never perform their duty as they ought, because they do not do it willingly, and with a ready mind.

4. The best way a minister can take to engage the respect of a people, is to discharge his own duty among them in the best manner that he can, and to be a constant example to them of all that is good.

4. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

In opposition to that filthy lucre which many proposed to themselves as their principal motive in their undertaking and discharge of the pastoral office, the apostle sets before them the crown of glory designed by the great Shepherd Jesus Christ, for all his faithful ministers.

Learn, 1. That Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd of the whole flock and heritage of God. He bought them, and ruleth them; he defendeth and saves them for ever. He is also the chief shepherd over all inferior shepherds; they derive their authority from him, act in his name, and are accountable to him at last.

4. This chief Shepherd will appear to judge all ministers and under-shepherds, to call them to account, whether they have faithfully discharged their work both publicly and privately, according to the foregoing directions.

3. They that are found to have done their duty, shall have what is infinitely better than temporal gain; they shall receive from the grand Shepherd an high degree of everlasting glory, a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

5. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.

Having settled and explained the duty of the pastors or spiritual guides of the church, he comes now to instruct the flock how to behave themselves to their ministers, and to one another; he calls them the younger, as being generally younger than their grave pastors, and to put them in mind of their inferiority, the term younger being used by our Saviour to signify an inferior, Luke xxii. 26. he exhorteth those that are younger and inferior to submit themselves to the elder, to give due respect and reverence to their persons, and to yield to their admonitions, reproof and authority, enjoining and commanding what the word of God requires, Heb. xiii. 17. As to one another, the rule is, that they should all be subject one to another, so far as to receive the reproofs and counsels one of another, and be ready to bear one another's burdens, and perform all the offices of friendship and charity one to another; and particular persons should submit to the directions of the whole society, Eph. v. 21. James v. 16. These duties of submission to superiors in age or office, and subjection to one another, being contrary to the proud nature and selfish interests of men, he advises them to be clothed with humility; let your minds, behaviour, garb, and whole frame be adorned with humility, as the most beautiful habit you can wear: This will render obedience and duty easy and pleasant; but if you be disobedient and proud, God will set himself to oppose and crush you; for he resisteth the proud, when he giveth grace to the humble.

Learn, 1. Humility is the great preserver of peace and order in all Christian churches and societies, consequently, pride is the great disturber of them, and the cause of most dissensions and breaches in the church.

2. There is a mutual opposition between God and the proud, so the word signifies; they war against him, and he scorneth them; he resisteth the proud, because they are like the devil, enemies to himself and to his kingdom among men, Prov. iii. 34.

3. Where God giveth grace to be humble, he will give more grace, more wisdom, faith, holiness, and humility.

6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Since God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble, therefore humble yourselves, not only one to another, but to the great God, whose judgments are coming upon the world, and must begin at the house of God, chap. iv. 17. his hand is almighty, and can easily pull you down if you be proud, or exalt you if you be humble, and will certainly do it, either in this life, if he see it best for you, or at the day of general retribution.

Learn, 1. The consideration of the omnipotent hand of God should make us humble and submissive to him in all that he brings upon us.

2. Humbling ourselves to God under his hand, is the next way to deliverance and exaltation; patience under his chastisements, submission to his pleasure, repentance, prayer, and hope in his mercy, will engage his help and release in due time, James iv. 7-10.

7. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

The apostle knowing that these Christians were already under very hard circumstances, does rightly suppose that what he had foretold of greater hardships yet a coming, might excite in them abundance of care and fear about the event of these difficulties, what the issue of them would be to themselves, their families, and the church of God; foreseeing this anxious care would be a heavy burden, and a sore temptation, he gives them the best advice, and supports it with a strong argument; his advice is, to cast all their care, or all care of themselves upon God; throw your cares, which are so cutting and distracting, that wound your souls, and pierce your hearts, upon the wise and gracious providence of God, trust in him with a firm composed mind, for he careth for you; he is willing to release you of your care, and take the care of you upon himself; he will either avert what you fear, or support you under it; he will order all events to you, so as shall convince you of his paternal love and tenderness toward you; and all shall be so ordered, that no hurt but good shall come unto you, Matt. vi. 25. Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Rom. viii. 28.

Learn, 1. The best Christians are apt to labour under the burden of anxious and excessive care; the apostle calls it, all your care; intimating, that the cares of Christians are various, and of more sorts than one; personal cares, family cares, cares for the present, and cares for the future; for themselves, for others, for the church.

2. The cares even of good people are very burdensome, and too often very sinful; when they arise from unbelief and diffidence, when they torture and distract the mind, unfit us for the duties of our place, and hinder our delightful service of God, they are very criminal.

3. The best remedy against immoderate care, is to cast our care upon God, and resign every event to his wise and gracious determination: A firm belief of the rectitude of the divine will and counsels calms the spirits of man; We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done, Acts xxi. 14.

8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. 9. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Here the apostle does three things: 1. He shews them their danger from an enemy more cruel and restless than even the worst of men, whom he describes, (1.) By his characters and names; he is an adversary, that adversary of yours; not a common adversary, but an enemy that impeads you, and litigates against you in your grand depending cause, and aims at your very souls. 2. The devil, the grand accuser of all the brethren; this title is derived from a word which signifies to strike through or to stab; he would strike malignity into our natures, and poison into our souls; if he could have struck these people with passion and murmuring in their sufferings, perhaps, he might have drawn them to apostasy and ruin. 3. He is a roaring lion, hungry, fierce, strong, and cruel; the fierce and greedy pursuer of souls. (2.) By his business; he walks about, seeking whom he may devour; his

his whole design is to *derour* and destroy souls; to that end he is unwearied and restless in his malicious endeavours; for he always, night and day, goes about, studying and contriving whom he may ensnare to their eternal ruin. 2. Our duty inferred from hence is, 1. To *be sober*, and to govern both the outward and the inward man by the rules of temperance, modesty, and mortification. 2. To *be vigilant*; not secure or careless, but rather suspicious of constant danger from this spiritual enemy, and, under that apprehension, to be watchful and diligent to prevent his designs, and save our souls. 3. To *resist him stedfast in the faith*; it was the faith of these people that Satan aimed at; if he could overturn their faith, and draw them into apostasy, then he knew he should gain his point and ruin their souls; therefore, to destroy their faith, he raises bitter persecutions, and sets the grand potentates of the world against them; this strong trial and temptation they must *resist*, by being well grounded, resolute, and *stedfast in the faith*. To encourage them to this, 3. The apostle tells them, that their care was not singular, for they *knew that the like afflictions befall their brethren* in all parts of the world, and that all the people of God were their fellow-soldiers in this warfare.

Learn, 1. All the great persecutions that ever were in the world, were raised, spirited up, and conducted by the devil; he is the grand persecutor, as well as the *deceiver and accuser of the brethren*; men are his willing spiteful instruments, but he is the chief *adversary* that wars against Christ and his people, Gen. iii. 15. Rev. xii. 12.

2. The design of Satan in raising persecutions against the faithful servants of God is to bring them to apostasy, by reason of their sufferings, and so to destroy their souls.

3. Sobriety and watchfulness are necessary virtues at all times, but especially in times of suffering and persecution; you must moderate your affection to worldly things, or else Satan will soon overcome you.

4. If you would overcome Satan, either as a tempter, accuser, or persecutor, you must *resist him stedfast in the faith*; if your faith give way you are gone; therefore, *above all, take the shield of faith*, Eph. vi. 16.

5. The consideration of what others suffer, is proper to encourage us to bear our own share in any affliction; *the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren*.

10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

We now come to the conclusion of this epistle, which the apostle begins with a most weighty prayer, which he addresseth to God as the *God of all grace*, the author and finisher of every heavenly gift and quality, acknowledging on their behalf, that God had already called them to be partakers of that eternal glory, which, being his own, he had promised and settled upon them, through the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ. 2. You may observe what he prays for on their account; not that they might be excused from sufferings, but that their sufferings might be moderate and short, and, after they had suffered awhile, that God would restore them to a settled and peaceable condition, and perfect his work in them; that he would stablish them against wavering, either in faith, or duty; that he would strengthen them that are weak, and settle them upon Christ the foundation so firmly, that their union with him might be indissoluble and everlasting.

Learn, 1. That all grace is from God; it is he that restrains, converts, comforteth, and saveth men by his grace.

2. All that are called into a state of grace, are called to partake of eternal glory and happiness.

3. Those that are called to be heirs of eternal life through Jesus Christ, must, nevertheless, suffer in this world, but their sufferings will be but for a little while.

4. The perfecting, stablishing, strengthening, and settling of good people in grace, and their perseverance therein, is so difficult a work, that only the God of all grace can accomplish it; and therefore he is earnestly to be sought unto by continual prayer and dependence upon his promises.

11. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

From this doxology we may learn, that they that have obtained grace from the God of all grace, should and will ascribe glory, dominion, and power, to him for ever and ever.

12. By Silvanus a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose) I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Here the apostle does, 1. Recapitulate the design of his writing this epistle to them, which was, (1.) To testify, and, in the strongest terms to assure them, that the doctrine of salvation, which he had explained, and they had embraced, was the true account of the grace of God, foretold by the prophets, and published by Jesus Christ. (2.) To exhort them earnestly that, as they had embraced the gospel, they would continue stedfast in it, notwithstanding the arts of seducers or the persecutions of enemies. 2. He recommends Silvanus, the person by whom he sent them this brief epistle, as a brother that he esteemed faithful and friendly to them, and hoped they would account him so, though he was a minister of the uncircumcision.

Learn, 1. That an honourable esteem of the ministers of religion tends much to the success of their labours; when we are convinced they are faithful, we shall profit more by their ministerial services; the prejudices some of these Jews might have against Silvanus, as a minister of the Gentiles, would soon wear off, when they were once convinced that he was a faithful brother.

2. The main thing that ministers ought to aim at in their labours, is to convince their people of the certainty and excellency of the Christian religion; this the apostles did exhort and testify with all their might.

3. A firm persuasion that we are in the true way to heaven, will be the best motive to stand fast, and persevere therein.

13. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus my son.

St. Peter being at Babylon in Assyria when he wrote this epistle, (whither he travelled, as the apostle of the circumcision, to visit that church, which was the chief of the dispersion,) sends the salutation of that church to the other churches to whom he wrote, telling them, that God had elected or chosen the Christians at Babylon out of the world to be his church, and to partake of eternal salvation through Christ Jesus, together with them and all other faithful Christians, chap. i. 2. In this salutation he particularly joins Mark the evangelist, who was then with him, and who was his son in a spiritual sense, being begotten by him to Christianity.

Learn, That all the churches of Jesus Christ ought to have a most affectionate concern one for another; they should love, and pray for, and be as helpful one to another as they possibly can.

14. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

He exhorts them to fervent love and charity one towards another, and to express this by giving the kiss of peace, according to the common custom of those times and countries, and so concludes with a benediction, which he confines to those only that are in Christ Jesus, united to him by faith, and sound members of his mystical body: The blessing he pronounceth upon these is peace, by which he means all necessary good, all manner of prosperity; to this he adds his amen, in token of his earnest desire and undoubted expectation that the blessing of peace would be the portion of all the faithful.

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

By M. J. Hill.

The penman of this epistle appears plainly to be the same who wrote the foregoing; and whatsoever difference some learned men apprehend they discern in the stile of this epistle from that of the former, this cannot be a sufficient argument to assert, that it was written by Simon, who succeeded the apostle James in the church at Jerusalem, inasmuch as he who wrote this epistle calls himself *Simon Peter*, and an apostle, ver. 1. and says, that he was one of the three apostles that were present at Christ's transfiguration, ver. 18. and says expressly, that he had written a former epistle to them, chap. iii. 1. and the design of this second epistle is the same with that of the former, as is evident from the first verse of the third chapter; whence observe, that, in the things of God, we have need of precept upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough to keep it in remembrance; and yet these are the things which should be most faithfully recorded, and frequently remembered by us.

In this chapter we have, 1. An introduction, or preface, making way for, and leading to, what is principally designed by the apostle, ver. 1—4. 2. An exhortation to advance and improve in all Christian graces, ver. 5, 6, 7. To enforce this exhortation, and engage them seriously and heartily to comply with it, he adds, 1. A representation of the very great advantage which will thereby accrue to them, ver. 8—11. 2. A promise of the best assistance the apostle was able to give to facilitate and forward this good work, ver. 12—15. 3. A declaration of the certain truth and divine original of the gospel of Christ, in the grace whereof they were exhorted to increase and persevere.

1. **SIMON** Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3. According as his divine power hath given unto all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The apostle Peter being moved by the Holy Ghost to write once more to those who from among the Jews were turned to faith in Christ, begins this second epistle with an introduction, wherein the same persons are described, and the same blessings are desired, that are in the preface to his former letter; but there are some additions or alterations, which ought to be taken notice of in all the three parts of the introduction.

1. We have here a description of the person that wrote the epistle, by the name Simon, as well as Peter, and by the title of servant, as well as that of apostle; Peter, being in both epistles, seems to be the name most frequently used, and with which he may be thought to be best pleased, being given him by our Lord, upon his confessing Jesus to be Christ, the Son of the living God; and the very name signifying and sealing that truth to be the fundamental article, the rock on which all must build; but the name Simon, though omitted in the former epistle, is mentioned in this, lest the total omission of that name, which was given him when he was circumcised, should make all Jewish believers, who were all zealous of the law, to become jealous of the apostle, as if he disclaimed and despised circumcision; he here styles himself a servant (as well as an apostle) of Jesus Christ; in this he may be allowed to glory, as David does, Psalm cxvi. 16. the service of Christ is the way to the highest honour, John xii. 26. Christ himself is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and he makes all his servants kings and priests unto God, Rev. i. 6. How great an honour is it to be the servants of this Master! This is what we cannot, without sin, be ashamed of: To triumph in being Christ's servant, is very proper for those who are engaging others to enter into, or abide in the service of Christ.

2. We have account of the people to whom this epistle is written; they have been described in the former epistle, as elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; and here, as having obtained precious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; for the faith here mentioned is vastly different from the false faith of the heretic, and the feigned faith of the hypocrite, and the fruitless faith of the formal professor (how orthodox soever he is) it is the faith of God's elect, Tit. i. 1. wrought by the Spirit of God in effectual calling. Observe, 1. True saving faith is a precious grace, and that not only as it is very uncommon, very scarce, even in the visible church, a very small number of true believers among a great multitude of visible professors, Matt. xxii. 14. but true faith is very excellent, and of very great use and advantage to those who have it; the just lives by faith, a truly divine, spiritual life; faith procures all the necessary supports and comforts of this excellent life; faith goes to Christ and buys the wine and milk, Isa. lv. 1. that are the proper nourishment of the new creature; faith buys and brings home the tried gold, the heavenly treasure that does enrich; faith takes and puts on the white raiment, the royal robes that clothe and adorn, Rev. iii. 18. Observe, 2. Faith is alike precious in the private Christian and in the apostle; it produces the same precious effects in the one and in the other. Faith unites the weak believer to Christ, as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his faith justified in the sight of God, and that from all sins, Acts xiii. 39. Faith, in whomsoever it is, takes hold of the same precious Saviour, and applies the same precious promises. 3. This precious faith is obtained of God. Faith is the gift of God, wrought by the Spirit, who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. 4. The preciousness of faith, as well as our obtaining it, is through the righteousness of Christ. The satisfactory, meritorious righteousness and obedience of Christ gives faith all its value and preciousness? And the righteousness of such a person cannot but be of infinite value to those who by faith receive it. For, 1. This Jesus Christ is God, yea our God, as it is in the original. He is truly God, an infinite being who hath wrought out this righteousness, and therefore it must be of infinite value. 2. He is the Saviour of them that believe, and as such he yielded this meritorious obedience; and therefore it is of such great benefit and advantage to them, because, as surety and saviour, he wrought out this righteousness in their stead.

3. We have the apostolical benediction, wherein he wishes for the multiplication and increase of the divine favour to them, and the advancement and growth of the work of grace in them, and that peace with God and in their own consciences (which cannot be without grace may abound in them); this is the very same benediction that is in the former epistle; but here he adds, 1. An account of the way and means whereby grace and peace are multiplied, it is through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ; this acknowledged and believing in the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is the great improvement of spiritual life, or it could not be the way to life eternal, John xvii. 3. We have, 2. The ground of the apostle's faith in asking, and of the Christian's hope in expecting the increase of grace; what we have already received should encourage us to ask for more; he that has begun the work of grace will perfect it. Observe, 1. The fountain of all spiritual blessings is the divine power of Jesus Christ, who could not discharge all the office of mediator, unless he was God as well as man. 2. All things that have any relation to, and influence upon the true spiritual life, the life and power of godliness, is from Jesus Christ; in him all fulness dwells, and it is from him we receive, and grace for grace, John i. 16. even all that is necessary for the preserving, improving, and perfecting of grace and peace, which are called here in this verse godliness and life, (according to

some expositors.) 3. Knowledge of God, and faith in him, are the channel whereby all spiritual supports and comforts are conveyed to us; but then we must own and acknowledge God as the author of our effectual calling, for so he is here described; him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Observe here, That the design of God in calling or converting men, is to bring them to glory and virtue, that is, peace and grace, as some understand it; but many prefer the marginal reading [by glory and virtue]; and so we have effectual calling set forth as the work of the glory and virtue, or the glorious power of God, which is described Eph. i. 19. it is the glory of God's power to convert sinners; this is that power and glory of God which are seen and experienced in his sanctuary, Psalm lxxiii. 2. this power or virtue is to be extolled by all that are called out of darkness into marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

In the fourth verse the apostle goes on to encourage their faith and hope in looking for an increase of grace and peace, because the same glory and virtue are employed and evidenced in giving the promises of the gospel, that are exercised in our effectual calling. Observe, 1. The good things which the promises make over are exceeding great, pardon of sin is one of the blessings here intended; how great this is, all who know any thing of the power of God's anger will readily confess; and this is one of those promised favours, in bestowing whereof the power of the Lord is great, Numb. xiv. 17. to pardon sins that are numerous and heinous (every one of which deserves God's wrath and curse, and that for ever) is a wonderful thing, and so called, Psalm cxix. 18. 2. The promised blessings of the gospel are very precious; as the great promise of the Old Testament was the seed of the woman, (the Messiah) Heb. xi. 39. so the great promise of the New Testament is the Holy Ghost, Luke xxiv. 39. and how precious must the enlivening, enlightening, sanctifying Spirit be! 3. They who receive the promises of the gospel, do partake of the divine nature; these are renewed in the spirit of their mind, after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; their hearts are set for God and his service; they have a divine temper and disposition of soul; though the law be the ministration of death, and the letter killeth, yet the gospel is the ministration of life, and the Spirit quickeneth those who are naturally dead in trespasses and sins. 4. Those in whom the Spirit does work the divine nature, are freed from the bondage of corruption: They who are, by the Spirit of grace, renewed in the spirit of their mind, are translated into the liberty of the children of God: For it is the world in which corruption does reign: They who are not of the Father, but of the world, are under the power of sin: The world lies in wickedness, 1 John v. 19. And the dominion that sin has in the men of the world, is through lust; their desires are to it, and therefore it rules over them: The dominion sin has over us, is according to the delight we have in it.

5. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6. And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; 7. And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

In these words the apostle comes to the chief thing intended in this epistle, to excite and engage them to advance in grace and holiness, they having already obtained precious faith, and been made partakers of the divine nature; this is a very good beginning, but it is not to be rested in, as if we were already perfect; the apostle had prayed that grace and peace might be multiplied to them, and now he exhorts them to press forward for the obtaining of more grace; we should as we have opportunity exhort those we pray for, and excite them to the use of all proper means to obtain what we desire God to bestow upon them; and they who will make any progress in religion, must be very diligent and industrious in their endeavours; without giving all diligence, there is no gaining any ground in the work of holiness; they who are slothful in the business of religion, will make nothing of it; we must strive, if we will enter in at the strait gate, Luke xiii. 24.

Here we cannot but observe how the believer's way is marked out step by step; first he must get virtue, by which some understand justice; and then the knowledge, temperance, and patience that follow, being joined with it, the apostle may be supposed to put them upon pressing after the four cardinal virtues, or the four elements that go to the making up of every virtue or virtuous action; but seeing it is a faithful saying, and constantly to be asserted, that they who have faith to be careful to maintain good works, Tit. iii. 8. by virtue here we may understand strength and courage, without which the believer cannot stand up for good works, by abounding and excelling in them; the righteous must be bold as a lion, Prov. xxviii. 1. a cowardly Christian, who is afraid or ashamed to profess the doctrines or practise the duties of the gospel, must expect that Christ will be ashamed of him another day; let not your hearts fail you in the evil day, but shew yourselves valiant in standing against all opposition, and resisting every enemy, world, flesh, devil, yea and death too; we have need of virtue while we live, and it will be of excellent use when we come to die.

2. The believer must add knowledge to his virtue, prudence to his courage; there is a knowledge of God's name, which must go before our faith, Psalm ix. 10. and we cannot approve of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, till we know it; but there are proper circumstances for duty which must be known and observed; we must use the appointed means, and observe the accepted time. Christian prudence regards the persons we have to do with, and the place and company we are in; every believer must labour after that knowledge and wisdom that is profitable to direct, both as to the proper method and order wherein all Christian duties are to be performed, and as to the way and manner of performing them.

3. We must add temperance to our knowledge; we must be sober and moderate in our love to and use of the good things of this life; and if we have a right understanding and knowledge of outward comforts, we shall see their worth and usefulness are vastly inferior to that of spiritual mercies; bodily exercises and bodily privileges profit but little, and therefore are to be esteemed and used accordingly; the gospel teaches sobriety as well as honesty, Tit. ii. 12. we must be moderate in desiring and using the good things of natural life, such as meat, drink, clothes, sleep, recreations, credit, &c. an inordinate desire after these, is inconsistent with an earnest desire after God and Christ; and they who take more of these than is due, can neither render to God nor man what is due to them.

4. Add to temperance, patience; which must have its perfect work, or we cannot be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, James i. 4. for we are born to trouble, and must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven; and it is this tribulation, Rom. v. 3. which worketh patience, that is, requires the exercise, and occasions the increase of this grace; whereby we bear all calamities and crosses with silence and submission, without murmuring against God or complaining of him; but justifying him who lays all afflictions upon us, owning that our sufferings are less than our sins deserve, and believing they are no more than we ourselves do need.

5. To patience we must add godliness, and this is the very thing which is produced by patience, for that works experience, Rom. v. 4. When Christians

tians bear afflictions patiently, they get an experimental knowledge of the loving kindness of their heavenly Father, which he will not take from his children, even when he visits their iniquity with the rod, and their transgressions with stripes, Psalm lxxxix, 32, 33, and hereby they are brought to that child-like fear and reverential love wherein true godliness does consist: To which,

6. We must add brotherly kindness, a tender affection to all our fellow-Christians, who are the children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travellers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance, and therefore are to be loved with a pure heart fervently, with a love of complacency, as those who are peculiarly near and dear to us, in whom we take particular delight, Psalm. xvi. 3.

7. Charity, or a love of good-will to all mankind; must be added to the love of delight which we have for those who are the children of God. God has made of one blood all nations, and all the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, and are all capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions, and therefore, though upon a spiritual account Christians are distinguished and dignified above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities and relieve their necessities, and promote their welfare both in body and soul, as they have opportunity: thus must all believers in Christ evidence that they are the children of God, who is good to all, but is especially good to Israel.

All the forementioned graces must be had, or we shall not be thoroughly furnished for all good works, for the duties of the first and second table, for active and passive obedience, and for those services wherein we are to imitate God, as well as for those wherein we only obey him.

8. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To engage us to an industrious and unwearied pursuit of all the forementioned graces, the apostle sets forth the advantages that redound to all who successfully labour so as to get these things to be and abound in them. This is proposed,

1. More generally, ver. 8. the having these things make not barren (or fruitful) nor unfruitful; where, according to the stile of the Holy Ghost, we must understand a great deal more than is expressed; for when it is said concerning Ahaz, the vilest and most provoking of all the kings of Judah, that he did not right in the sight of the Lord, 2 Kings xvi. 2. we are to understand as much as if it had been said, he did what was most offensive and abominable, as the following account of his life does shew; so when it is here said, that the being and abounding of all Christian graces in us will make us neither unactive nor unfruitful, we are thereby to understand, that it will make us very zealous and lively, vigorous and active, in all practical Christianity, and eminently fruitful in the works of righteousness; these will bring much glory to God, by bringing forth much fruit among men, being fruitful in knowledge, or the acknowledged of our Lord Jesus Christ, owning him to be their Lord, and evidencing themselves to be his servants, by their abounding in the work that he has given them to do: this is the necessary consequence of adding one grace to another: for where all christian graces are in the heart, they improve and strengthen, encourage and cherish one another; so they all thrive and grow, as the apostle intimates in the beginning of ver. 8. and wherever grace abounds there will be an abounding in good works.

How desirable it is to be in such a case the apostle evidenceth, ver. 9. where he sets forth how miserable it is to be without those quickening, fruitifying graces: for he who hath, or though he pretends or seems to have the forementioned graces, does not exercise and improve them, is blind; that is, as to spiritual and heavenly things, as the next words explain it; he cannot see far off: this present evil world he can see, and does dote upon, but has no discerning at all of the world to come, so as to be affected with the spiritual privileges and heavenly blessings thereof; he that sees the excellencies of Christianity, must needs be diligent in endeavours after all those graces that are absolutely necessary for obtaining glory, honour, and immortality; but where these graces are not obtained nor endeavoured after, men are not able to look forward to the things that are but a very little way off in reality, though, in appearance or in their apprehension, they are at a great distance, because they put them far away from them: and how wretched is their condition, who are thus blind, as to the awfully great things of the other world! Who cannot see any thing of the reality and certainty, the greatness and nearness of the glorious reward God will bestow on the righteous, and the dreadful punishment he will inflict on the ungodly.

But this is not all the misery of those who do not add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, &c. they are as unable to look backward as forward, their memories are slippery and unable to retain what is past, as their sight is short and unable to discern what is future: they forget that they have been baptized, and had the means, and been laid under the obligations to holiness of heart and life. By baptism we are engaged in a holy war against sin, and are solemnly bound to fight against flesh, world, and devil. Often call to mind, and seriously meditate on your solemn engagement to be the Lord's, and your peculiar advantages and encouragements to lay aside all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

2. The apostle proposes two particular advantages that will attend or follow upon diligence in the work of a Christian: 1. Stability in grace: 2. A triumphant entrance into glory: These he brings in by re-assuming his former exhortation, and laying it down in other words; for what, ver. 5. is expressed by giving diligence to add to faith virtue, &c. is here expressed by giving diligence to make our calling and election sure; where we may observe, 1. It is the duty of believers to make their election sure, to clear it up to themselves, that they are the chosen of God. 2. The way to make sure their eternal election, is to make out their effectual calling, none can look into the book of God's eternal counsels and decrees, but in as much as whom God did predestinate, them he also called, if we can find we are effectually called, we may conclude we are chosen to salvation. 3. It requires a great deal of diligence and labour to make sure our calling and election; there must be a very close examination of ourselves, a very narrow search and strict enquiry, whether we are thoroughly converted, our minds enlightened, our wills renewed, and our whole souls changed as to the bent and inclination thereof;

and to come to a fixed certainty in this, requires the utmost diligence, and cannot be attained and kept without divine assistance, as we may learn from Psalm cxxxix. 23. Rom. viii. 16.

But how great soever the labour is, do not think much of it, for great is the advantage you gain by it; for, 1. By this you will be kept from falling, and that at all times and seasons, even in those hours of temptation that shall be on the earth; when others shall fall into heinous and scandalous sin, these shall be enabled to walk circumspectly, and keep on in the way of their duty; and when many fall into errors, these shall be preserved sound in the faith, and stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 2. They who are diligent in the work of religion, shall have a triumphant entrance into glory; whilst of those few who get to heaven some are scarcely saved, 1 Pet. iv. 18. with a great deal of difficulty, even as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 15. these, who are growing in grace and abounding in the work of the Lord, shall have an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord, even that everlasting kingdom where Christ reigns, and they shall reign with him forever and ever.

12. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. 13. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: 14. Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15. Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

The importance and advantage of progress and perseverance in grace and holiness, makes the apostle to be very diligent in doing the work of a minister of Christ, that he might thereby excite and assist them to be diligent in the duty of Christians: If ministers be negligent in their work, it can hardly be expected the people will be diligent in theirs; therefore St. Peter will not be negligent, that is, at no time or place, in no part of his work: to no part of his charge, but will be exemplary and universally diligent, and that in the work of a remembrancer; this is the office of the best ministers, even the apostles themselves; they are the Lord's remembrancers, Isa. lxii. 6. they are especially bound to make mention of the promises and put God in mind of his engagements to do good to his people; and they are the people's remembrancers, making mention of God's precepts, and putting them in mind of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, that they may remember God's commandments to do them.

And this the apostle does, though some persons might think it needless, inasmuch as they already knew these things that he writes about, and were established in the very truth that he does insist upon. Observe, 1. We need to be put in mind of what we do already know, to prevent our forgetting it, and to improve our knowledge and reduce all to practice. 2. We must be established in the belief of the truth, that we may not be shaken by every wind of doctrine, and especially in that which is the present truth, what is the truth more peculiarly necessary for us to know in our day, what belongs to our peace, and what is more especially opposed in our time. The great doctrines of the gospel, that Jesus is the Christ; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and all who believe in God must be careful to maintain good works. These are truths the apostles insisted on in their day; these are faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance in every age of the Christian church. And as these must be constantly affirmed by ministers, Tit. iii. 8. so the people are to be well instructed and established therein, and yet must, after all their attainments in knowledge, be put in mind of such things as cannot be too clearly known, nor too firmly believed. The most advanced Christians cannot while in this world, be above ordinances, or beyond the need of those means, which God has appointed and does afford. And if the people need teaching and exhortation while they are in the body, it is very meet and just that ministers should as long as they are in this tabernacle, instruct and exhort them, and bring those truths to their remembrance that they have formerly heard; this being a proper means to stir them up to be diligent and lively in a course of gospel-obedience.

The apostle being set upon the work, tells us, ver. 14. what makes him earnest in this matter, even the knowledge he had, not only that he must certainly, but also that he must shortly put off this tabernacle. Observe, 1. The body is but the tabernacle of the soul. It is a mean and moveable structure, whose stakes can be easily removed, and its cords presently broken. 2. This tabernacle must be put off. We are not to continue long in this earthly house. As at night we put off our clothes and lay them by, so at death we must put off our bodies, and they must be laid up in the grave till the morning of the resurrection. 3. The nearness of death makes the apostle diligent in the business of life. Our Lord Jesus had shewed him, that the time of his departure was at hand, and therefore he bestirs himself with greater zeal and diligence, because the time is short; he must soon be removed from those to whom he wrote, and his ambition being that they should remember the doctrine he had delivered to them, after he himself was taken away from them, he commits his exhortation to writing. The apostle had not any great opinion of oral tradition, that was not so proper a means to reach the end he was in pursuit of. He would have them always to remember these things, and not only to keep them in mind, but also to make mention of them, as the original words do import. They who fear the Lord make mention of his name, and talk of his loving-kindness. This is the way to spread the knowledge of the Lord; and this the apostle had at heart; and they who have the written word of God are thereby put into a capacity to do this.

16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. 17. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Here we have the reason of giving the foregoing exhortation, and that with so much diligence and seriousness. These things are not idle tales, or a vain thing, but of undoubted truth and vast concern. The gospel is not a cunningly devised fable. These are not the words of one that hath a devil, or the contrivance of any number of men, who by cunning craftiness endeavour to deceive. The way of salvation by Jesus Christ is eminently the

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. An introduction, or preface, making way for, and leading to, what is principally designed by the apostle, ver. 1—4. 2. An exhortation to advance and improve in all Christian graces, ver. 5, 6, 7. To enforce this exhortation, and engage them seriously and heartily to comply with it, he adds, 1. A representation of the very great advantage which will thereby accrue to them, ver. 8—11. 2. A promise of the best assistance the apostle was able to give to facilitate and forward this good work, ver. 12—15. 3. A declaration of the certain truth and divine original of the gospel of Christ, in the grace whereof they were exhorted to increase and persevere.

1. **SIMON** Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3. According as his divine power hath given unto all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The apostle Peter being moved by the Holy Ghost to write once more to those who from among the Jews were turned to faith in Christ, begins this second epistle with an introduction, wherein the same persons are described, and the same blessings are desired, that are in the preface to his former letter; but there are some additions or alterations, which ought to be taken notice of in all the three parts of the introduction.

1. We have here a description of the person that wrote the epistle, by the name *Simon*, as well as *Peter*, and by the title of *servant*, as well as that of *apostle*; *Peter*, being in both epistles, seems to be the name most frequently used, and with which he may be thought to be best pleased, being given him by our Lord, upon his confessing *Jesus to be Christ, the Son of the living God*; and the very name signifying and sealing that truth to be the fundamental article, the rock on which all must build; but the name *Simon*, though omitted in the former epistle, is mentioned in this, lest the total omission of that name, which was given him when he was circumcised, should make all Jewish believers, who were all zealous of the law, to become jealous of the apostle, as if he disclaimed and despised circumcision; he here styles himself a *servant* (as well as an *apostle*) of *Jesus Christ*; in this he may be allowed to glory, as David does, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* the service of Christ is the way to the highest honour, *John xii. 26.* Christ himself is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*; and he makes all his servants *kings and priests unto God*, *Rev. i. 6.* How great an honour is it to be the servants of this Master! This is what we cannot, without sin, be ashamed of: To triumph in being *Christ's servant*, is very proper for those who are engaging others to enter into, or abide in the service of Christ.

2. We have account of the people to whom this epistle is written; they have been described in the former epistle, as *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*; and here, as *having obtained precious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; for the faith here mentioned is vastly different from the false faith of the heretic, and the feigned faith of the hypocrite, and the fruitless faith of the formal professor (how orthodox soever he is) it is the *faith of God's elect*, *Tit. i. 1.* wrought by the Spirit of God in effectual calling. Observe, 1. True saving faith is a *precious grace*, and that not only as it is very uncommon, very scarce, even in the visible church, a very small number of true believers among a great multitude of visible professors, *Matt. xxiii. 14.* but true faith is very excellent, and of very great use and advantage to those who have it; *the just lives by faith*, a truly divine, spiritual life; *faith* procures all the necessary supports and comforts of this excellent life; *faith* goes to Christ and *buys the wine and milk*, *Ila. lv. 1.* that are the proper nourishment of the new creature; *faith* buys and brings home the tried gold, the heavenly treasure that does enrich; *faith* takes and puts on the *white raiment*, the royal robes that clothe and adorn, *Rev. iii. 18.* Observe, 2. Faith is alike precious in the private Christian and in the apostle; it produces the same precious effects in the one and in the other. Faith unites the weak believer to Christ, as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his faith justified in the sight of God, and that from all sins, *Acts xiii. 39.* Faith, in whomsoever it is, takes hold of the same precious Saviour, and applies the same precious promises. 3. This precious faith is obtained of God. Faith is the gift of God, wrought by the Spirit, who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. 4. The preciousness of faith, as well as our obtaining it, is through the righteousness of Christ. The satisfactory, meritorious righteousness and obedience of Christ gives faith all its value and preciousness. And the righteousness of such a person cannot but be of infinite value to those who by faith receive it. For, 1. This Jesus Christ is God, yea our God, as it is in the original. He is truly God, an infinite being who hath wrought out this righteousness, and therefore it must be of infinite value. 2. He is the Saviour of them that believe, and as such he yielded this meritorious obedience; and therefore it is of such great benefit and advantage to them, because, as surety and saviour, he wrought out this righteousness in their stead.

3. We have the apostolical benediction, wherein he wishes for the multiplication and increase of the divine favour to them, and the advancement and growth of the work of grace in them, and that peace with God and in their own consciences (which cannot be without grace may abound in them); this is the very same benediction that is in the former epistle; but here he adds, 1. An account of the way and means whereby *grace and peace are multiplied*, it is *through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ*; this acknowledged and believing in the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is the great improvement of spiritual life, or it could not be the way to life eternal, *John xvii. 3.* We have, 2. The ground of the apostle's faith in asking, and of the Christian's hope in expecting the increase of grace; what we have already received should encourage us to ask for more; he that has begun the work of grace will perfect it. Observe, 1. The fountain of all spiritual blessings is the *divine power* of Jesus Christ, who could not discharge all the office of mediator, unless he was God as well as man. 2. All things that have any relation to, and influence upon the true spiritual life, the life and power of godliness, is from Jesus Christ; in him all fulness dwells, and it is from him we receive, and grace for grace, *John i. 16.* even all that is necessary for the preserving, improving, and perfecting of grace and peace, which are called here in this verse *godliness and life*, (according to

some expositors.) 3. Knowledge of God, and faith in him, are the channel whereby all spiritual supports and comforts are conveyed to us; but then we must own and acknowledge God as the author of our effectual calling, for so he is here described; him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Observe here, That the design of God in calling or converting men, is to bring them to glory and virtue, that is, peace and grace, as some understand it; but many prefer the marginal reading [by glory and virtue]; and so we have effectual calling set forth as the work of the glory and virtue, or the glorious power of God, which is described *Eph. i. 19.* it is the glory of God's power to convert sinners; this is that power and glory of God which are seen and experienced in his sanctuary, *Psal. lxxiii. 2.* this power or virtue is to be extolled by all that are called out of darkness into marvellous light, *1 Pet. ii. 9.*

In the fourth verse the apostle goes on to encourage their faith and hope in looking for an increase of grace and peace, because the same glory and virtue are employed and evidenced in giving the promises of the gospel, that are exercised in our effectual calling. Observe, 1. The good things which the promises make over are exceeding great, pardon of sin is one of the blessings here intended; how great this is, all who know any thing of the power of God's anger will readily confess; and this is one of those promised favours, in bestowing whereof the power of the Lord is great, *Numb. xiv. 17.* to pardon sins that are numerous and heinous (every one of which deserves God's wrath and curse, and that for ever) is a wonderful thing, and so called, *Psal. cxix. 18.* 2. The promised blessings of the gospel are very precious; as the great promise of the Old Testament was the seed of the woman, (the Messiah) *Heb. xi. 39.* so the great promise of the New Testament is the Holy Ghost, *Luke xxiv. 39.* and how precious must the enlivening, enlightening, sanctifying Spirit be! 3. They who receive the promises of the gospel, do partake of the divine nature; these are renewed in the spirit of their mind, after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; their hearts are set for God and his service; they have a divine temper and disposition of soul; though the law be the ministration of death, and the letter killeth, yet the gospel is the ministration of life, and the Spirit quickeneth those who are naturally dead in trespasses and sins. 4. Those in whom the Spirit does work the divine nature, are freed from the bondage of corruption: They who are, by the Spirit of grace, renewed in the spirit of their mind, are translated into the liberty of the children of God: For it is the world in which corruption does reign: They who are not of the Father, but of the world, are under the power of sin: The world lies in wickedness, *1 John v. 19.* And the dominion that sin has in the men of the world, is through lust; their desires are to it, and therefore it rules over them: The dominion sin has over us, is according to the delight we have in it.

5. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6. And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; 7. And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

In these words the apostle comes to the chief thing intended in this epistle, to excite and engage them to advance in grace and holiness, they having already obtained precious faith, and been made partakers of the divine nature; this is a very good beginning, but it is not to be rested in, as if we were already perfect; the apostle had prayed that *grace and peace might be multiplied to them*, and now he exhorts them to press forward for the obtaining of more grace; we should as we have opportunity exhort those we pray for, and excite them to the use of all proper means to obtain what we desire God to bestow upon them; and they who will make any progress in religion, must be very diligent and industrious in their endeavours; without giving all diligence, there is no gaining any ground in the work of holiness; they who are slothful in the business of religion, will make nothing of it; we must strive, if we will enter in at the strait gate, *Luke xiii. 24.*

Here we cannot but observe how the believer's way is marked out step by step; first he must get virtue, by which some understand justice; and then the knowledge, temperance, and patience that follow, being joined with it, the apostle may be supposed to put them upon pressing after the four cardinal virtues, or the four elements that go to the making up of every virtue or virtuous action; but seeing it is a faithful saying, and constantly to be asserted, that they who have faith to be careful to maintain good works, *Tit. iii. 8.* by virtue here we may understand strength and courage, without which the believer cannot stand up for good works, by abounding and excelling in them; the righteous must be bold as a lion, *Prov. xxviii. 1.* a cowardly Christian, who is afraid or ashamed to profess the doctrines or practise the duties of the gospel, must expect that Christ will be ashamed of him another day; let not your hearts fail you in the evil day, but shew yourselves valiant in standing against all opposition, and resisting every enemy, world, flesh, devil, yea and death too; we have need of virtue while we live, and it will be of excellent use when we come to die.

2. The believer must add knowledge to his virtue, prudence to his courage; there is a knowledge of God's name, which must go before our faith, *Psal. ix. 10.* and we cannot approve of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, till we know it; but there are proper circumstances for duty which must be known and observed; we must use the appointed means, and observe the accepted time. Christian prudence regards the persons we have to do with, and the place and company we are in; every believer must labour after that knowledge and wisdom that is profitable to direct, both as to the proper method and order wherein all Christian duties are to be performed, and as to the way and manner of performing them.

3. We must add temperance to our knowledge; we must be sober and moderate in our love to and use of the good things of this life; and if we have a right understanding and knowledge of outward comforts, we shall see their worth and usefulness are vastly inferior to that of spiritual mercies; bodily exercises and bodily privileges profit but little, and therefore are to be esteemed and used accordingly; the gospel teaches sobriety as well as honesty, *Tit. ii. 12.* we must be moderate in desiring and using the good things of natural life, such as meat, drink, clothes, sleep, recreations, credit, &c. an inordinate desire after these, is inconsistent with an earnest desire after God and Christ; and they who take more of these than is due, can neither render to God nor man what is due to them.

4. Add to temperance, patience; which must have its perfect work, or we cannot be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, *James i. 4.* for we are born to trouble, and must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven; and it is this tribulation, *Rom. v. 3.* which worketh patience, that is, requires the exercise, and occasions the increase of this grace; whereby we bear all calamities and crosses with silence and submission, without murmuring against God or complaining of him; but justifying him who lays all afflictions upon us, owning that our sufferings are less than our sins deserve, and believing they are no more than we ourselves do need.

5. To patience we must add godliness, and this is the very thing which is produced by patience, for that works experience, *Rom. v. 4.* When Chris-

tians bear afflictions patiently, they get an experimental knowledge of the loving kindness of their heavenly Father, which he will not take from his children, even when he visits their iniquity with the rod, and their transgressions with stripes, Psalm lxxxix, 32, 33, and hereby they are brought to that child-like fear and reverential love wherein true godliness does consist: To which,

9. We must add brotherly kindness, a tender affection to all our fellow-Christians, who are the children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travellers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance, and therefore are to be loved with a pure heart fervently, with a love of complacency, as those who are peculiarly near and dear to us, in whom we take particular delight, Psalm xvi. 3.

7. Charity, or a love of good-will to all mankind, must be added to the love of delight which we have for those who are the children of God. God has made of one blood all nations, and all the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, and are all capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions, and therefore, though upon a spiritual account Christians are distinguished and dignified above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities and relieve their necessities, and promote their welfare both in body and soul, as they have opportunity: thus must all believers in Christ evidence that they are the children of God, who is good to all, but is especially good to his.

All the forementioned graces must be had, or we shall not be thoroughly furnished for all good works, for the duties of the first and second table, for active and passive obedience, and for those services wherein we are to imitate God, as well as for those wherein we only obey him.

8. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail: 11. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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How desirable it is to be in such a case the apostle evidenceth, ver. 9. where he sets forth how miserable it is to be without those quickening, fruitifying graces: for he who hath, or though he pretends or seems to have the forementioned graces, does not exercise and improve them, is blind; that is, as to spiritual and heavenly things, as the next words explain it; he cannot see far off: this present evil world he can see, and does dote upon, but has no discerning at all of the world to come, so as to be affected with the spiritual privileges and heavenly blessings thereof; he that sees the excellencies of Christianity, must needs be diligent in endeavours after all those graces that are absolutely necessary for obtaining glory, honour, and immortality, but where these graces are not obtained nor endeavoured after, men are not able to look forward to the things that are but a very little way off in reality, though, in appearance or in their apprehension, they are at a great distance, because they put them far away from them: and how wretched is their condition, who are thus blind, as to the awfully great things of the other world! Who cannot see any thing of the reality and certainty, the greatness and nearness of the glorious reward God will bestow on the righteous, and the dreadful punishment he will inflict on the ungodly.

But this is not all the misery of those who do not add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, &c. they are as unable to look backward as forward, their memories are slippery and unable to retain what is past, as their sight is short and unable to discern what is future: they forget that they have been baptized, and had the means, and been laid under the obligations to holiness of heart and life. By baptism we are engaged in a holy war against sin, and are solemnly bound to fight against flesh, world, and devil. Often call to mind, and seriously meditate on your solemn engagement to be the Lord's, and your peculiar advantages and encouragements to lay aside all filthy lusts of flesh and spirit.

2. The apostle proposes two particular advantages that will attend or follow upon diligence in the work of a Christian: 1. Stability in grace: 2. A triumphant entrance into glory: These he brings in by re-assuming his former exhortation, and laying it down in other words; for what, ver. 5. is expressed by giving diligence to add to faith virtue, &c. is here expressed by giving diligence to make our calling and election sure; where we may observe, 1. It is the duty of believers to make their election sure, to clear it up to themselves, that they are the chosen of God. 2. The way to make sure their eternal election, is to make out their effectual calling, none can look into the book of God's eternal counsels and decrees, but in as much as whom God did predestinate, them he also called, if we can find we are effectually called, we may conclude we are chosen to salvation. 3. It requires a great deal of diligence and labour to make sure our calling and election; there must be a very close examination of ourselves, a very narrow search and strict enquiry, whether we are thoroughly converted, our minds enlightened, our wills renewed, and our whole souls changed as to the bent and inclination thereof;

and to come to a fixed certainty in this, requires the utmost diligence, and cannot be attained and kept without divine assistance, as we may learn from Psalm cxxxix. 23. Rom. viii. 16.

But how great soever the labour is, do not think much of it, for great is the advantage you gain by it; for, 1. By this you will be kept from falling, and that at all times and seasons, even in those hours of temptation that shall be on the earth; when others shall fall into heinous and scandalous sin, these shall be enabled to walk circumspectly, and keep on in the way of their duty; and when many fall into errors, these shall be preserved sound in the faith, and stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

2. They who are diligent in the work of religion, shall have a triumphant entrance into glory; whilst of those few who get to heaven some are scarcely saved, 1 Pet. iv. 18. with a great deal of difficulty, even as fire, 1 Cor. iii. 15. these, who are growing in grace and abounding in the work of the Lord, shall have an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord, even that everlasting kingdom where Christ reigns, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever.

12. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. 13. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: 14. Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15. Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

The importance and advantage of progress and perseverance in grace and holiness, makes the apostle to be very diligent in doing the work of a minister of Christ, that he might thereby excite and assist them to be diligent in the duty of Christians: If ministers be negligent in their work, it can hardly be expected the people will be diligent in theirs; therefore St. Peter will not be negligent, that is, at no time or place, in no part of his work: to no part of his charge, but will be exemplary and universally diligent, and that in the work of a remembrancer; this is the office of the best ministers, even the apostles themselves; they are the Lord's remembrancers, 1 Th. ixii. if they are especially bound to make mention of the promises and put God in mind of his engagements to do good to his people; and they are the people's remembrancers, making mention of God's precepts, and putting them in mind of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, that they may remember God's commandments to do them.

And this the apostle does, though some persons might think it needless, inasmuch as they already knew these things that he writes about, and were established in the very truth that he does insist upon. Observe, 1. We need to be put in mind of what we do already know, to prevent our forgetting it, and to improve our knowledge and reduce all to practice. 2. We must be established in the belief of the truth, that we may not be shaken by every wind of doctrine, and especially in that which is the present truth, what is the truth more peculiarly necessary for us to know in our day, what belongs to our peace, and what is more especially opposed in our time. The great doctrines of the gospel, that Jesus is the Christ; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and all who believe in God must be careful to do all good works. These are truths the apostles insisted on in their day; these are faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation in every age of the Christian church. And as these must be constantly affirmed by ministers, Tit. iii. 8. so the people are to be well instructed and established therein, and yet must, after all their attainments in knowledge, be put in mind of such things as cannot be too clearly known, nor too firmly believed. The most advanced Christians cannot while in this world, be above ordinances, or beyond the need of those means, which God has appointed and does afford. And if the people need teaching and exhortation while they are in the body, it is very meet and just that ministers should as long as they are in this tabernacle, instruct and exhort them, and bring these truths to their remembrance that they have formerly heard; this being a proper means to stir them up to be diligent and lively in a course of gospel-obedience.

The apostle being set upon the work, tells us, ver. 14. what makes him earnest in this matter, even the knowledge he had, not only that he must certainly, but also that he must shortly put off this tabernacle. Observe, 1. The body is but the tabernacle of the soul. It is a mean and moveable structure, whose stakes can be easily removed, and its cords presently broken. 2. This tabernacle must be put off. We are not to continue long in this earthly house. As at night we put off our clothes and lay them by, so at death we must put off our bodies, and they must be laid up in the grave till the morning of the resurrection. 3. The nearness of death makes the apostle diligent in the business of life. Our Lord Jesus had shewed him, that the time of his departure was at hand, and therefore he bestirs himself with greater zeal and diligence, because the time is short; he must soon be removed from those to whom he wrote, and his ambition being that they should remember the doctrine he had delivered to them, after he himself was taken away from them, he commits his exhortation to writing. The apostle had not any great opinion of oral tradition, that was not so proper a means to reach the end he was in pursuit of. He would have them always to remember these things, and not only to keep them in mind, but also to make mention of them, as the original words do import. They who fear the Lord make mention of his name, and talk of his loving-kindness. This is the way to spread the knowledge of the Lord; and this the apostle had at heart; and they who have the written word of God are thereby put into a capacity to do this.

16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. 17. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Here we have the reason of giving the foregoing exhortation, and that with so much diligence and seriousness. These things are not idle tales, or a vain thing, but of undoubted truth and vast concern. The gospel is not a cunningly devised fable. These are not the words of one that hath a devil, or the contrivance of any number of men, who by cunning craftiness endeavour to deceive. The way of salvation by Jesus Christ is eminently the

counsel of God, and most excellent contrivance of the infinitely wise Jehovah: it was he invented this way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, whose power and coming are set forth in the gospel, and the apostle's preaching was a making these things known. 1. The preaching of the gospel is a making known the power of Christ, that he is able to save to the utmost all who come to God by him. He is the mighty God, and therefore can save from both the guilt and filth of sin. 2. The coming of Christ also is made known by the preaching of the gospel. He that was promised immediately after the fall of man, as in the fulness of time to be born of a woman, is now come in the flesh, and whosoever denies this is an antichrist, 1 John iv. 3. he is acted and influenced by the spirit of antichrist; but those who are the true apostles and ministers of Christ, and are directed and guided by the Spirit of Christ, they evidence that Christ is come according to the promise, which all the Old Testament believers died in the faith of, Heb. xi. 39. Christ is come in the flesh; inasmuch as those whom he undertakes to save are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same, that he might suffer in their nature and stead, and thereby make an atonement. This coming of Christ the gospel is very plain and circumstantial in setting forth: But there is a second coming, which it likewise mentions, which the ministers of the gospel ought also to make known, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with all his holy angels, for he is appointed to be judge both of quick and dead. He will come to judge the world in righteousness by the everlasting gospel, and call us all to an account of all things done in the body, whether good or evil.

And though this gospel of Christ has been blasphemously called a fable by one of those wretches who call themselves the successors of St. Peter; yet our apostle proves, that it is of the greatest certainty and reality, inasmuch as during our blessed Saviour's abode here on earth, when he took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, he sometimes manifested himself to be God, and particularly to our apostle and the two sons of Zebedee, who were eye-witnesses of his divine majesty, when he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, exceeding white, as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. This Peter, James and John were eye-witnesses of, and therefore might and ought to attest it: and surely their testimony is true, when they witness what they have seen with their eyes, yea and heard with their ears: For besides the visible glory that Christ was invested with here on earth there was an audible voice from heaven. Where observe,

1. What a gracious declaration was made, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* The best voice that ever came from heaven to earth; God is well pleased with Christ, and with us in him. This is the Messiah that was promised, through whom all who believe in him shall be accepted. 2. This declaration is made by God the Father, who thus publicly owns his Son, even in this state of humiliation, when he was in the form of a servant; yea, proclaims him to be his beloved Son, when he was in that low condition; yea, so far are Christ's mean and low circumstances from abating the love of the Father to him, that his laying down his life is said to be one special reason of the Father's love, John x. 17. 3. The design of this voice was to do our Saviour a singular honour while he was here below. *He received honour and glory from God the Father.* This is the person whom God delights to honour. As he requires us to give honour and glory to his Son by confessing him to be our Saviour; so does he give glory and honour to our Saviour by declaring him to be his Son. 4. This voice is from heaven, called here the excellent glory, which still reflects a greater glory upon our blessed Saviour. This declaration is from God the fountain of honour, and from heaven the seat of glory, where God is most gloriously present. 5. This voice was heard, and that so as to be understood by Peter, James and John. They not only heard a sound, as the people did, John xii. 28. but they understood the sense. God opens the ears and understandings of his people to receive what they are concerned to know, when others are like Paul's companions, who only heard a sound of words, Acts ix. 7. but understood not the meaning thereof, and therefore are said not to hear the voice of him that spake, Acts xxii. 9. Blessed are those who not only hear but understand; who believe the truth, and feel the power of the voice from heaven, as he did; who testify these things, and we have all the reason in the world to receive his testimony; for who would refuse to give credit to what is so circumstantially laid down as this account of the voice from heaven, of which the apostle tells us? 6. That it was heard by them in the holy mount, when they were with Jesus. The place wherein God affords any peculiar or gracious manifestation of himself is thereby made holy, not with an inherent holiness, but as the ground was holy where God appeared to Moses, Exod. iii. 5. and the mountain holy on which the temple was built, Psalm lxxxvii. 1. Such places are relatively holy, and to be regarded as such during the time that men do in themselves experience, or may, by warrant from the world believingly expect the special presence and gracious influence of the holy and glorious God.

19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: 20. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

In these words the apostle lays down another argument to prove the truth and reality of the gospel, and intimates, that this second proof is more strong and convincing than the former; and does more unanswerably make out, that the doctrine of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a mere fable or cunning contrivance of men, but the wise and wonderful counsel of the holy and gracious God. For this is foretold by the prophets and penmen of the Old Testament, who spake and wrote under the influence, and according to the direction of the Spirit of God. Here note,

1. The description that is given of the scriptures of the Old Testament, they are called a *more sure word of prophecy.* 1. It is a prophetic declaration of the power and coming, the Godhead and incarnation of our Saviour, which we have in the Old Testament. It is therefore told, *that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* His power to destroy the devil and his works, and his being made of a woman, are there foretold; and the great and awful Old Testament name of God, Jehovah, as read by some, signifies only he will be; and that name of God, Exod. iii. 14. is rendered by many, *I will be that I will be;* and thus understood, they point at God's being incarnate in order to the redemption and salvation of his people, as what was to come. But the New Testament is a history of that whereof the Old Testament is a prophecy. *All the prophets*

and the law prophesied until John, Matt. xi. 13. And the evangelists and apostles have written the history or what was before delivered as prophecy. Now the accomplishment of the Old Testament by the New, and the agreeableness of the New Testament to the Old, is a full demonstration of the truth of both. Read the Old Testament as a prophecy of Christ, and with diligence and thankfulness use the New as the best exposition of the Old. 2. *The Old Testament is a more sure word of prophecy.* It is so to the Jews who received it as the oracles of God. Following prophets confirmed what had been delivered to those who went before, and these prophecies had been written by the express command, and preserved by the special care, and many of them fulfilled by the wonderful providence of God, and therefore were more certain to them who had all along received and read the scriptures, than the apostle's account of this voice from heaven. *Moses and the prophets* do more powerfully persuade than even *miracles themselves*, Luke xvi. 31. How firm and sure should our faith be, who have such a firm and sure word to rest upon? All the prophecies of the Old Testament are more sure and certain to us who have the history of the exact and most minute accomplishment of them.

2. The encouragement the apostle gives us to search the scriptures. He tells us, *we do well if we take heed to them;* that is, apply our minds to understand the sense, and our hearts to believe the truth of this sure word, yea, to bend ourselves to it, that we may be moulded and fashioned by it. The word is that form of doctrine into which we must be cast, Rom. vi. 17. *that formulary of knowledge*, Rom. ii. 20. by which we are to regulate our thoughts and sentiments, our words and confessions, our whole life and conversation. If we thus apply ourselves to the word of God, we certainly do well in all respects, what is pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves; and is indeed but a paying that regard which is due to the oracles of God. But in order to this giving heed to the word, the apostle suggests some things that are of singular use to those who would attend to the scriptures to any good purpose. 1. They must account and use the scripture as a light which God hath sent into and set up in the world, to dispel that darkness which is upon the face of the whole earth. The word is a lamp to the feet of those who use it aright; this discovers the way wherein men ought to walk. This is the means whereby we come to know the way of life. 2. They must acknowledge their own darkness. This world is a place of error and ignorance, and every man in the world is naturally without that knowledge which is necessary in order to attain eternal life. 3. If ever men are made wise to salvation, it is by the shining of the word of God into their hearts. Natural notions of God are not sufficient for fallen man, who does at best actually know a great deal less, and yet does absolutely need to know a great deal more of God than Adam did while he continued innocent. 4. When the light of the scripture is darted into the blind mind and dark understanding by the Holy Spirit of God, then the *spiritual day does dawn, and the day-star does arise in that soul.* This enlightening of a dark benighted mind is like the day-break that improves and advances, spreads and diffuses itself through the whole soul, till it make perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. It is a growing knowledge; they who are this way enlightened never think they know enough, till they come to know as they are known. To give heed to this light must needs be the interest and duty of all, and all that do truth come to this light, while evil-doers keep at a distance from it.

3. The apostle lays down one thing as previously necessary in order to our giving heed to, and getting good by the scriptures, and that is, the knowing that all prophecy is of divine original. Now this important truth he not only asserts, but proves. 1. Observe, that no scripture prophecy is of private interpretation, or a man's own proper opinion an explication of his own mind, but the revelation of the mind of God. This was the difference between the prophets of the Lord and the false prophets, who have been in the world. The prophets of the Lord did not speak or do any thing of their own mind, as Moses the chief of them says expressly, Num. xvi. 28. *I have not done any of the works (nor delivered any of the statutes and ordinances) of my own mind.* But false prophets *spoke a vision of their own heart, not out of the mouth of the Lord,* Jer. xxiii. 16. The prophets and penmen of the scripture spake and wrote what was the mind of God; and though when under the influence and guidance of the Spirit, it may well be supposed, that they were willing to reveal and record such things, yet it is because God would have them spoken and written. But though the scripture be not the effusion of man's own private opinion or inclination, but the revelation of the mind and will of God, yet every private man ought to search it, and come to understand the sense and meaning thereof. 2. This important truth of the divine original of the scriptures, that what is contained in them is the mind of God and not of man, is to be known and owned by all that give heed to the sure word of prophecy. That the scriptures are the word of God, is not only an article of the true Christian's faith, but it is also a matter of science or knowledge. As a man doth not barely believe, but know assuredly that that very person is his particular friend, in whom he sees all the proper peculiar distinguishing marks and characters of his friend; so the Christian knows that *book to be the word of God*, in and upon which he sees all the proper marks and characters of a divinely inspired book. He tastes a sweetness, and feels a power, and sees a glory in it truly divine. 3. The divinity of the scripture must be known and acknowledged in the first place, before men can possibly use them, before they can give good heed to them. To call off our minds from all other writings, and apply them in a peculiar manner to these, as the only certain and infallible rule does necessarily require our being fully persuaded that these are divinely inspired, and contain what is truly the mind and will of God.

Now seeing it is so absolutely necessary that persons be fully persuaded of the scripture's divine original, the apostle, ver. 21. tells us how the Old Testament came to be compiled, and that, 1. Negatively, *it came not by the will of man.* Neither the things themselves that are recorded, and make up the several parts of the Old Testament, are the opinions of men, nor was the will of any of the prophets or penmen of the scriptures the rule or reason, why any of those things were written which make up the canon of the scripture. 2. Affirmatively, *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Observe, 1. *They were holy men of God* who were employed about that book which we receive as the word of God. If Balaam and Caiaphas, and others who were destitute of holiness, had any thing of the spirit of prophecy, upon occasion, yet such sort of persons were not employed to write any part of the scriptures for the use of the church of God. All the penmen of the scriptures were holy men of God. 2. *These holy men were moved by the Holy Ghost* in what they delivered as the mind and will of God. The Holy Ghost is the supreme agent, the holy men are but instruments. 1. The Holy Ghost inspires and dictates to them what they were to deliver of the mind of God. 2. He powerfully excites and effectually engages them to speak (and write) what he had put into their mouths. 3. He does so wisely and carefully assist and direct them in the delivery of what they had received from him, that they were effectually secured from any the least mistake in expressing what they revealed. So that the very words of scripture are to be accounted the words of the Holy Ghost.

Ghost, and all the plainness and simplicity, all the power and virtue, and all the elegance and propriety of the very words and expressions are to be regarded by us as proceeding from God. Mix faith therefore with what you find in the scriptures; esteem and reverence your Bible as a book written by holy men, inspired, influenced and assisted by the Holy Ghost.

C H A P. II.

The apostle having in the foregoing chapter exhorted them to proceed and advance in the Christian race, he now comes to remove, as much as in him lay, what he could not but apprehend would hinder their complying with his exhortation. He therefore gives them fair warning of false teachers, by whom they might be in danger of being seduced. To prevent this, 1. He describes these seducers as impious in themselves, and very pernicious to others, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. He assures them of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them, ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. 3. He tells us how contrary the method is which God takes with those who fear him, ver. 7, 8, 9. 4. He fills up the rest of the chapter with a farther description of those seducers of whom he would have them beware.

1. BUT there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil-spoken of. 3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you :

In the end of the former chapter there is mention made of holy men of God, that lived in the times of the Old Testament, and were used as the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost, in writing the sacred oracles; but in the beginning of this he tells us they had, even in that time, false prophets in the church as well as true. In all ages of the church, and under all dispensations, when God sends true prophets, the devil sends some to seduce and deceive. False prophets in the Old Testament, and false Christs and false apostles and seducing teachers in the New. Concerning these observe, 1. Their business is to bring in destructive errors, *even damnable heresies*, as the business of teachers sent of God is to shew the way of truth, even the true way to everlasting life. There are *damnable heresies* as well as damnable practices; and false teachers are industrious to spread pernicious errors. 2. *Damnable heresies* are commonly brought in privily under the cloke and colour of truth. 3. They who introduce destructive heresies, *deny the Lord that bought them*. They reject and refuse to hear and learn of the great teachers sent from God, though he is the only saviour and redeemer of men, who paid a price sufficient to redeem as many worlds of sinners as there are sinners in the world. 4. They who bring in errors destructive to others, bring swift (and therefore sure) *destruction upon themselves*. Self-destroyers are soon destroyed; and those who are so hardened as to propagate errors destructive to others, shall surely and suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

He proceeds in the second verse to tell us the consequence with respect to others, and here we may learn, 1. Corrupt leaders seldom fail of many to follow them; though the way of error is a pernicious way, yet many are ready to walk therein. Men drink in iniquity like water, and are pleased to live in error. *The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so*. 2. The spreading of error will bring up an *evil report on the way of truth*; that is, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, *who is the way, the truth, and the life*. Christian religion is from the God of truth as the author, and leads to true happiness in the enjoyment of the true God, as the end, and works truth in the inward part as the means of acceptably serving God. And yet this way of truth is traduced and blasphemed by those who embrace and advance destructive errors. This the apostle has foretold, as what should certainly come to pass. Let us not be offended at any thing of this in our day, but take care that we give no occasion to the enemy to blaspheme the holy name whereby we are called, or speak evil of that whereby we hope to be saved.

Observe, in the next place, the method seducers take to draw disciples after them. They use feigned words, they flatter, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, inducing them to give in intirely into the opinions which these seducers endeavour to propagate, and sell and deliver themselves over to the instruction and government of these false teachers, who make a gain of them whom they make their proselytes, serving themselves and making some advantage of them: For all this is through covetousness, with a design and desire to get more wealth, or credit, or commendation, by encreasing the number of their followers. The faithful ministers of Christ, who shew men the way of truth, desire the profit and advantage of their followers, that they may be saved; but these seducing teachers desire and design only their own temporal advantage and worldly grandeur.

—3. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. 4. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment: 5. And spared not the old world; but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly: 6. And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Men are apt to think that a reprieve is the forerunner of a pardon, and if judgment be not speedily executed, it is or will be certainly reversed. But the apostle tells us, that how successful and prosperous soever false teachers may be, and that for a time, *yet their judgment lingereth not*. God hath determined long ago how he will deal with them. Such unbelievers, who endeavour to turn others from the faith are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. The righteous judge will speedily take vengeance; the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. To prove this assertion, here are several examples of the righteous judgment of God, in taking vengeance on sinners, proposed to our serious consideration.

1. See how God dealt with the angels that sinned. Observe, 1. No excellency will exempt a sinner from punishments. If the angels, who excel us vastly in strength and knowledge, violate the law of God, the sentence, which that law does award shall be executed upon them, and that without mercy or mitigation, for God did not spare them. Whence observe, 2. By how much the more excellent the offender, by so much the more severe the punishment. These angels, who had the advantage of men as to the dignity of their nature, are immediately punished. There is no sparing them for a few days, no favour at all shewn them. 3. Sin does debase and degrade the persons who commit it. The angels of heaven are cast down from the height of their excellency, and divested of all their glory and dignity upon their disobedience. Whosoever sins against God, does a manifest hurt to himself. 4. They that rebel against the God of heaven, shall all be sent down to hell. There is no place or state between the height of glory and the depth of misery, in which they shall all be allowed to rest. If creatures sin in heaven, they must suffer in hell. 5. Sin is the work of darkness, and darkness is the wages of sin. The darkness of misery and torment follows the darkness of sin. They who will not walk according to the light and direction of God's law, shall be deprived of the light of God's countenance and the comforts of his presence. 6. As sin binds men over to punishment, so misery and torment hold men under punishment. The darkness, which is their misery, keeps them so as that they cannot get away from their torment. 7. The last degree of torment is not till the day of judgment. The sinning angels, though in hell already, yet are reserved to the judgment of the great day.

2. See how God dealt with the old world, even in much what the same way that he dealt with the angels. He spared not the old world. Here observe, 1. The number of offenders signifies no more to procure any favour, than the quality. If the sin be universal, the punishment shall likewise extend to all. But, 2. If there be but few righteous, they shall be preserved. God does not destroy the good with the bad. He doth in wrath remember mercy. 3. They who are *preachers of righteousness* in an age of universal corruption and degeneracy, *holding forth the word of life* in an unblameable and exemplary conversation, shall be preserved in a time of general destruction. 4. God can make use of those creatures as the instruments of his vengeance in punishing sinners, which he at first made and pointed for their service and benefit. He destroyed the whole world by water. But observe, 5. What is the procuring cause of this, *It was a world of ungodly men*. Ungodliness puts men out of the divine protection, and exposes them to utter destruction.

3. See how God dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah, though they were situated in a country like the garden of the Lord, yet if in such a fruitful soil they shall abound in sin, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness, and a well-watered country into dust and ashes. Observe, 1. No political union or confederacy can keep off judgments from a sinful people. Sodom and the neighbouring cities were no more secured by their regular government, than the angels by the dignity of their nature, or the old world by their vast number. 2. God can make use of contrary creatures to punish incorrigible sinners. He destroys the *old world by water*, and Sodom by fire. He that keeps fire and water from hurting his people, *Isa. xliii. 2.* can make either to destroy his enemies, therefore they are never safe. 3. Most heinous sins bring most grievous judgments. They who were abominable in their vices, were remarkable for their plagues. They who were sinners exceedingly before the Lord, must expect the most dreadful vengeance. 4. The punishment of sinners in former ages is designed for the example of those who come after, not only in the time of living, but follow them in their *course and way of living*. Men who live ungodly must see what they are to expect if they go on still in a course of impiety. Let us take warning by all the instances of God's taking vengeance which are recorded for our admonition, and to prevent our promising ourselves impunity, though we go on in a course of sin.

7. And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.) 9. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

When God sends destruction on the ungodly, he commands deliverance for the righteous; and if he rain fire and brimstone on the wicked, he will cover the head of the just, and they shall be hid in the day of his anger. This we have an instance of in his preserving Lot. Where observe, 1. The character given of Lot, he is called a just man; this he was as to the generally prevailing bent of his heart, and through the main of his conversation. God does not account men just or unjust from one single act, but from their general course of life. And here is a just man in the midst of a most corrupt and profligate generation universally gone off from all good. He does not follow the multitude to do evil, but in a city of injustice he walks uprightly. 2. The impression the sins of others have upon this righteous man. Though the sinner takes pleasure in his wickedness, it is a grief and vexation to the soul of the righteous. In bad company we cannot escape either guilt or grief. Let the sins of others be a trouble to us, otherwise it will not be possible for us to keep ourselves pure. 3. Here is particular mention of the duration and continuance of this good man's grief and vexation; *it was from day to day*. Being accustomed to hear and see their wickedness did not reconcile him to it, nor abate of the horror that was occasioned by it. This is the righteous man that God preserved from the desolating judgment that destroyed all round about him. And from this instance we are taught to argue, that *God knows how to deliver his people*, and punish his enemies. It is here presupposed, that the righteous must have their temptations and trials. The devil and his instruments will thrust fore at them that they may fail; and if we will get to heaven, it must be through many tribulations; it is then our duty to reckon upon, and prepare for them. Observe here, 1. *The Lord knows them that are his*. He hath set apart him that is godly for himself, and if there is but one in five cities he knows him; and where there is a greater number he cannot be ignorant of or overlook any of them. 2. The wisdom of God is never at a loss about ways and means to deliver his people. They are often utterly at a loss, and can see no way; he can discover a great many. 3. The deliverance of the godly is the work of God; that which he concerns himself in, both his wisdom to contrive the way, and his power to work out the deliverance *out of temptation*, to prevent their falling into sin, and their being ruined by their troubles. And surely if he can deliver out of temptation, he can keep from falling into it, if he did not see such trials to be necessary. 4. God makes a very great difference in his dealings with the godly and the wicked. When he saves his people from destruction, he delivers over his enemies to deserved ruin. The unjust has no share in the salvation God works out for the

the righteous. The wicked are referred to the day of judgment. Here we see, 1. There is a day of judgment. God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world. 2. The preservation of impenitent sinners is only a reserving them to the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

10. But chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government: presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities: 11. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. 12. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; 13. And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time: spots they are, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you: 14. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: 15. Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bofor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16. But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet. 17. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 18. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; 19. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 20. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again: and, The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

The apostle's design being to warn us of, and arm us against seducers, he now returns to discourse more particularly of them, and gives us an account of their character and conduct, which does abundantly justify the righteous Judge of the world in reserving them in an especial manner for the most severe and heavy doom; as Cain is taken under special protection, that he might be kept for uncommon vengeance: But why will God thus deal with these false teachers? this he shews in what follows.

These walk after the flesh, they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, they give up themselves to the conduct of their own fleshly mind, refusing to make their reason stoop to divine revelation, and bring every thought to the obedience of Christ; they, in their lives, act directly contrary to God's righteous precepts, and comply with the demands of corrupt nature; evil opinions are often accompanied with evil practices; and they who are for propagating errors, are for improving in wickedness; they will not sit down contented in the measure of iniquity to which they have attained, nor is it enough for them to stand up and maintain, and defend that wickedness they have already committed, but they walk after the flesh, they go on in their sinful course, and increase unto more ungodliness, and greater degrees of impurity and uncleanness too: they also pour contempt on those whom God has set in authority over them and requires them to honour; these therefore despise the ordinances of God, and we need not wonder at it, for they are bold and daring, obstinate and refractory, and will not only in their hearts despise, but with their tongues will utter slanderous and reproachful words of those who are set over them.

This he aggravates, by setting forth the very different conduct of more excellent creatures, even the angels; of whom observe, 1. They are greater in power and might, and that even than those who are clothed with authority and power among the sons of men, and much more than those false teachers who are slanderous revilers of magistrates and governors; the good angels vastly exceed us in all natural and moral excellencies, in strength, understanding and holiness too. 2. Good angels are accusers of sinful creatures, either of their own kind, or ours, or both; they who are allowed to behold the face of God, and stand before his throne, cannot but have a zeal for his honour, and accuse and blame those who dishonour him. 3. Angels bring their accusations of sinful creatures before the Lord; they do not publish their faults, and tell their crimes to their fellow creatures, in a way of calumny and slander; but it is before the Lord, who is the judge, and will be the avenger of all impiety and injustice. 4. The good angels mingle no bitter revilings, or base reproaches, with any of their accusations or charges they bring against the wickedest and worst of criminals; let us, who pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, imitate the angels in this particular; If we complain of wicked men, let it be to God, and that not with rage and reviling, but with compassion and composedness of mind, that may evidence that we belong to him who is meek and merciful.

The apostle having shewn in ver. 11. how unlike seducing teachers are to the most excellent creatures, proceeds, ver. 12. to shew how like they are to the most inferior; they are like the horse and mule, which have no understanding; they are as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed; men, under the power of sin, are so far from observing divine revelation, that they do not exercise reason, or act according to the direction thereof; they walk by sight, and do not by faith, and judge of things according to their senses; as they represent things pleasant and agreeable, so they must be approved and esteemed; brute creatures follow the instinct of their sensitive appetite, and sinful man follows the inclination of his carnal mind; these refuse to employ

the understanding and reason God has given them, and so are ignorant of what they might and ought to know; and therefore observe, 1. Ignorance is the cause of evil-speaking; and, 2. Destruction will be the effect of it; these persons shall be utterly destroyed in their own corruption; their vices not only expose them to the wrath of God in another world, but many times bring them to misery and ruin in this life; and surely such sort of imprudent offenders, who glory in their shame, and to whom openness in sin is an improvement of the pleasure of sinning, do most justly deserve all the plagues of this life and the pains of the next in the greatest extremity! Therefore whatever they meet with is the just reward of their unrighteousness. Such sinners, who sport themselves in mischief, deceive themselves and disgrace all they belong to; for by one sort of sins they prepare themselves for another, and their extravagant feastings, their intemperance in eating and drinking, brings them to commit all manner of lewdness, so that their eyes are full of adultery; their wanton looks shew their own impure lusts, and are designed and directed to enkindle the like in others: and this is what they cannot cease from; the heart is insatiate lusting, and the eye incessant in looking after what may gratify their unclean desires; and they who are themselves impudent and incessant in sin, are very diligent and often successful in deceiving others, and drawing others into the same excess of riot. But here observe who they are who are in the greatest danger of being led away into error and impiety, even the unstable; those whose hearts are not established with grace, are easily turned into the way of sin, or else such sort of sensual wretches will not be able to prevail upon them; for these are not only riotous and lascivious, but covetous also; and these kind of practices their hearts are exercised with; they pant after riches, and the desire of their souls is to the wealth of this world; it is a considerable part of their work to contrive to get wealth; in this their hearts are exercised, and when they execute their projects; and if men abandon themselves to all sorts of lusts, we cannot wonder that the apostle should call them cursed children; for they are liable to the curse of God denounced against such ungodly, such unrighteous men, and they bring a curse to all that hearken and adhere to them.

The apostle, ver. 15, 16. proves that they are cursed children, even such covetous persons as the Lord abhors, by shewing, 1. They have forsaken the right way; and it cannot be but such self-seekers must be out of the right way, which is a self-denying way. 2. They are gone into a wrong way; they have erred and strayed from the way of life, and gone over into the path which leads to death, and takes hold of hell; and this he makes out by shewing it to be the way of Balaam the son of Bofor. 1. That is a way of unrighteousness, into which men are led by the wages of unrighteousness. 2. Outward temporal good things are the wages sinners expect, and promise themselves, though they are often disappointed. 3. The inordinate love of the good things of this world, turns men out of the way which leads to the unspeakably better things of another life; love of riches and honour turned Balaam out of the way of his duty, although he knew that the way he took displeased the Lord. 4. They, who from the same principle are guilty of the same practices with notorious sinners, are in the judgment of God the followers of such vile offenders, and therefore must reckon upon being at last where they are; they shall have their portion with those in another world whom they imitated in this. 5. Heinous and hardened sinners do sometimes meet with rebukes for their iniquity. God stops them in their way, and does open the mouth of conscience, or by some startling providence startle and affright them. 6. Though some more uncommon and extraordinary rebukes may for a little while cool mens courage, and hinder their violent progress in the way of sin, it will not make them forsake the way of iniquity, and go over in the way of holiness; if rebuking a sinner for his iniquity would have made a man have returned to his duty, surely the rebuke of Balaam must have produced this effect; for here was a surprising miracle wrought, the dumb ass, in whose mouth no man can expect to meet with reproof, is enabled to speak and that with a human voice, and to her owner and master, who is here called a prophet, for the Lord appeared, and spake sometimes to him, Num. xxii. 23, 24. but indeed he was among the prophets of the Lord, as Judah among the apostles of Christ; and she exposes the madness of his conduct, and opposes his going on in this evil way, and yet all in vain; they who will not yield to usual methods of reproof, will be but little influenced by miraculous appearances to turn them from their sinful courses; he is indeed restrained from actual cursing the people, but he had so strong a desire after the honours and riches that was promised him, that he went as far as he could, and did his uttermost to get from under the restraint that was upon him.

The apostle proceeds, in ver. 17. to a further description of seducing teachers, whom he sets forth as wells, or fountains without water. Observe, 1. Ministers should be as wells or fountains, where the people may find instruction, direction and comfort: But, 2. False teachers have nothing of this to impart to those who consult them; the word of truth is the water of life, which refreshes the souls that receive it; but these deceivers are set upon spreading and promoting error, and therefore are set forth as empty, because there is no truth in them; in vain then are all our expectations of being fed and filled with knowledge and understanding by those who are themselves ignorant and empty, they are also clouds carried with a tempest; when we see a cloud, we expect a refreshing shower from it; but these are clouds which yield no rain, for they are driven with the wind, but not of the Spirit, but the stormy wind or tempest of their own ambition and covetousness; they espouse and spread those opinions that will procure the most applause and advantage to themselves; and as clouds obstruct the light of the sun and darken the air, so do these darken counsel by words without knowledge, and wherein there is no truth; and, seeing these men are for promoting darkness in this world, it is very just that the mist of darkness should be their portion in the next; utter darkness was produced for the devil, the great deceiver and his angels, those instruments that he uses to turn men away from the truth, and therefore for them it is reserved, and that for ever; the fire of hell is everlasting, and the smoke of the bottomless pit riseth up for ever and ever.

And it is just with God to deal thus with them, because, 1. They allure those they deal with, and draw them into a net, or catch them as men do fish; and, 2. It is with great swelling words of vanity, lofty expressions, which have a great sound but little sense. 3. They work upon the corrupt affections and carnal fleshly lusts of men, proposing what is grateful to them; And, 4. They seduce persons, who in reality avoided and kept at a distance from those who spread, and those who embraced hurtful and destructive errors. Observe, 1. By application and industry men attain a skillfulness and dexterity in promoting error; they are as artful and as successful as the fisher, that makes angling his daily employment; the business of these men is to draw disciples after them, and in their methods and management there are some things worth observing, how they snit their bait to those they desire to catch. 2. Erroneous teachers have a peculiar advantage to win men over to them, because they have sensual pleasures to take them with; whereas the ministers of Christ put men upon self-denial; and the mortifying of those lusts that others gratify and please; wonder not therefore that truth prevails no more, or that errors spread so much; 3. Persons who have for a while adhered to the truth, and kept clear of errors, may by the subtilty and industry of seducers be so far deceived, as to fall into those errors

errors they had for a while *clean escaped*: be therefore always upon your guard, maintain a godly jealousy of yourselves, search the scriptures, pray for the Spirit to instruct and establish you in the truth, walk humbly with God, and watch against every thing that may provoke him to give you up to a reprobate mind, that you may not be taken with the fair and specious pretences of these false teachers, who promise liberty to all that will hearken to them, but not true Christian liberty for the service of God, but a licentiousness in sin, to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. To prevent these men gaining proselytes, he tells us, that in the midst of all *their talk of liberty, they themselves are the vilest slaves, for they are the servants of corruption*; their own lusts have gotten a complete victory over them, and they are actually in bondage to them, making provision for the flesh, to satisfy its cravings, and comply with its directions, and obey its commands; their minds and hearts are so far corrupted and depraved, that they have neither power nor will to refuse the task that is imposed on them; they are conquered and captivated by their spiritual enemies, and *yield their members servants of unrighteousness*: and what a shame it is to be overcome and commanded by those who are themselves the servants of corruption, and slaves to their own lusts! This consideration should prevent our being led away by these seducers; and to this he adds another, *ver. 20.* it is not only a shame and disgrace to be seduced by those who are themselves the slaves of sin, and led captives by the devil at his pleasure, but it is a real detriment to those who have *clean escaped from them who live in error*, for hereby their *latter end is made worse than the beginning*. Here we see, 1. It is an advantage to escape the pollutions of the world, to be kept from gross and scandalous sins, though men are not thoroughly converted and savingly changed; for hereby we are kept from grieving those who are truly serious, and emboldening those who are openly profane; whereas, if we run with others to the same excess of riot, and abandon ourselves to the sins of the age, we afflict and dishearten those who endeavour to walk as becomes the gospel, and strengthen the hands of those who are already engaged in open rebellion against the most High, as well as alienate ourselves more from God, and harden our hearts against him. 2. Some men are, for a time, kept from the pollutions of the world, by the knowledge of Christ, who are not savingly renewed in the spirit of their mind; a religious education has restrained many whom the grace of God has not renewed; if we receive the light of the truth, and have notional knowledge of Christ in our heads, it may be of some present service to us; but we must receive the love of the truth, and hide God's word in our heart, or it will not sanctify and save us. 3. Those who have, for a time, escaped the pollutions of the world, are at first ensnared and entangled by false teachers; they first perplex men with some plausible and specious objections against the truths of the gospel, and the more ignorant and unstable are hereby made to stagger, and brought to question the truths of doctrines they have received, because they cannot solve all the difficulties, nor answer all the objections that are urged by these seducers. 4. When men are once entangled, they are easily overcome; therefore should Christians keep close to the word of God, and watch against those who seek to perplex and bewilder them; and that because if men that have once escaped are again entangled, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

The apostle does, in the two last verses of the chapter, set himself to prove that a state of apostasy is worse than a state of ignorance: for this is a condemning the way of righteousness, after they have had some knowledge of it, and expressed some liking to it; this carries in it a declaring that they have found some iniquity in the way of righteousness, and some fullness in the word of truth: now to bring up such an evil report upon the good way of God, and such a false charge against the way of truth, must necessarily expose to the heaviest condemnation; the misery of such deserters of Christ and his gospel, is more unavoidable, and more intolerable than that of other offenders; for, 1. God is more highly provoked by them who do by their conduct despise the gospel, as well as disobey the law, and do reproach and pour contempt upon God and his grace. 2. The devil does more narrowly watch, and more closely confine those whom he has recovered, after they had once gone off from him, and professed to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, *Matt. xii. 45.* they are kept under a stronger guard; and no wonder it should be so, when they have licked up their own vomit again, returning to the same errors and impieties that they had once cast off, and seemed to detest and loathe, and wallow in that filthiness, from which they appeared once to be really cleansed. Well, if the scripture gives such an account of Christianity on the one hand, and of sin on the other, as we have here in these two verses, we certainly ought highly to approve of the former, and persevere therein, because it is a way of righteousness, and a holy commandment, and to loathe and keep at the greatest distance from the latter, because it is set forth as most offensive and abominable.

C H A P. III.

The apostle drawing towards the conclusion of his second epistle, begins this last chapter of it with repeating the account of his design and scope in writing a second time to them, *ver. 1, 2.* He proceeds to mention one thing that induced him to write this second epistle, namely, the coming of scoffers, whom he describes *ver. 3-7.* 3. He instructs and establishes them in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to judgment, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* 4. He sets forth the use and improvement which Christians ought to make of Christ's second coming, and that dissolution and renovation of things, which will accompany that solemn coming of our Lord, *ver. 11-18.*

1. **T**HIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; 2. That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

That the apostle might the better reach his end in writing this epistle, which is to make them steady and constant in a fiducial and practical remembrance of the doctrine of the gospel, he, 1. Expresses his special affection and tenderness of them, by calling them *beloved*; hereby evidencing that he added to godliness, brotherly-kindness, as he had, *chap. i. 7.* exhorted them to do; ministers must be examples of love and affection, as well as life and conversation. 2. He evidences a sincere love to them, and hearty concern for them, by writing the same thing to them, though in other words; it being safe for them, it shall not be grievous to him to write upon the same subject and pursue the same design, by those methods which are most likely to succeed. 3. The better to recommend the matter, he tells them, that what he would have them to remember, are, 1. The words spoken by the holy prophets, who were divinely inspired, both enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and seeing these persons minds were purified by the sanctifying operation of the same Spirit, they were the better disposed to

receive and retain what came from God by the holy prophets. 2. The commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; and therefore the disciples and servants of Christ ought to regard what those who are sent by him have declared unto them to be the will of their Lord, what God has spoken by the prophets of the Old Testament, and Christ has commanded by the apostles of the New, cannot but demand and deserve to be frequently remembered; and they who meditate on these things, will feel the quickening virtues thereof: it is by these things the pure minds of Christians are to be stirred up, that they may be active and lively in the work of holiness, and zealous and unwearied in the way to heaven.

3. Knowing this first, that there should come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4. And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water. 6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. 7. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men.

To quicken and excite us to a serious minding and firm adhering to what God has revealed to us by the prophets and apostles, we are told that there will be scoffers, men who will both make a mock of sin, and of salvation from it; God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, is what men will scoff at, and that in the last days, under the gospel. This, indeed, may seem very strange, that the New Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace, which is spiritual, and therefore more agreeable to the nature of God than the Old, should be ridiculed and reproached; but the spirituality and simplicity of New Testament worship is directly contrary to the carnal mind of man; and this accounts for what the apostle seems here to hint at, namely, that scoffers should be more numerous and more bold in the last days than ever before; though in all ages those who were born and walked after the flesh, did persecute, revile, and reproach them who were born and did walk after the Spirit, yet in the last days there will be a great improvement in the art and impudence of bantering serious godliness, and those who firmly adhere to that circumspection and self-denial which the gospel prescribes; this is what is mentioned as a thing well known to all Christians, and therefore they ought to reckon upon it, that they may not be surprised and shaken, as if some strange thing happened unto them.

Now to prevent the true Christians being overcome, when attacked by these scoffers, we are told, 1. What sort of persons they are; they walk after their own lusts, they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, and carnal, corrupt affections, and not the dictates and directions of right reason, and an enlightened, well informed judgment; this they do in the course of their conversation, they live as they list, and they speak as they list; it is not only their inward minds that are evil and opposite to God, as the mind of every unrenewed sinner is, *Rom. viii. 7.* alienated from God, ignorant of him, and averse to him; but they are grown to such an height of wickedness, that they proclaim openly what is in the hearts of others who are yet carnal; they say their tongues are their own, and their strength, and time, and all is their own, and who is Lord over them? who shall contradict or controul them, or ever call them to an account for what they say or do? and as they scorn to be confined by any laws of God in their conversation, so neither will they bear that the revelations of God should dictate and prescribe to them what they have to believe; as they will walk in their own way, and talk their own language, so will they also think their own thoughts, and form principles which are altogether their own; here also their own lusts alone shall be consulted by them; none but such accomplished libertines as are here described, can take a seat, at least they cannot sit in the seat of the scornful; by this ye shall know them, that ye may the better be upon your guard against them. 2. We also are foretold how far they will proceed, they will attempt to shake and unsettle us, even as to our belief of Christ's second coming; they will scoffingly say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* *ver. 4.* without this all the other articles of the Christian faith will signify very little: this is that which fills up, and gives the finishing stroke to all the rest: the promised Messiah is come, he was made flesh and dwelt among us; he is altogether such an one as is said before, and has done all that for us which has before been taken notice of; these principles the enemies of Christianity have all along endeavoured to overturn; but, as these do all rest upon facts which are already past, and of which this and the other apostles have given us the most sure and satisfying evidence, it is probable, they will at last grow weary of their opposition to them: and yet, while one very principle article of our faith does refer to what is still behind, and only has a promise to rest upon, here they will still attack us, even to the end of time; till our Lord is come, they will not themselves believe that he will come; nay, they will laugh at the very mention of his second coming, and do what in them lies to put all out of countenance who do seriously believe and wait for it: now therefore let us see how this point stands, both on the believer's part and on the part of these seducers; the believer does not only desire that he may come, but, having a promise that he will come, a promise that he himself has made and often repeated, a promise received and reported by faithful witnesses, and left upon sure record, he is also firmly and fully persuaded that he will come; therefore do all that in them lies to cheat themselves and others into a persuasion that he never will come; if they cannot deny that there is a promise, yet they will laugh at that very promise; which argues much higher degrees of infidelity and contempt; *Where is the promise, say they, of his coming?* 3. We are also forewarned of the method of their reasoning, for while they laugh they will pretend to argue too; to this purpose they add, that since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, *ver. 4.* this is a subtil, though not a solid way of reasoning, it is apt to make impressions upon weak minds, and especially upon wicked hearts: because sentence against them is not speedily executed, therefore they flatter themselves, that it never will, whereupon their hearts are fully set in them to do evil, *Eccles. viii. 11.* thus they act themselves, and thus they would persuade others to act; so here, they say, the fathers are fallen asleep, they are all dead to whom the promise was made, and it never was made good in their time, and there is no likelihood that it ever will be in any time: why should we trouble ourselves about it? if there had been any truth or certainty in the promise you speak of, we surely should have seen somewhat of it before this time, some signs of his coming, some preparatory steps in order to it, whereas we find to this very day, all things continue as they were, without any change, even from the beginning of the creation:

Since the world has undergone no changes in the course of so many thousand years, why should we affright ourselves as if it were to have an end? Thus do these scoffers argue! *Because they see no changes, therefore they fear no God*; Psalm lv. 19. They neither fear him nor his judgments; what he never has done, they would conclude he never can, or never will do.

4. Here is the fulsome of their argument detected; whereas they confidently had said, there had not been any change from the beginning of the creation; the apostle puts us in remembrance of a change already past, which, in a manner, does equal that which we are called to expect and look for; which was the drowning of the world in the days of Noah; this the scoffers had overlooked, they took no notice of it; though they might have known it, and ought to have known it, yet *this they willingly are ignorant of*, &c. 5. they choose to pass it over in silence, as if they had never heard or known any thing of it; if they knew it; they did not like to retain it in their knowledge; they did not *rejoice this truth in the love of it*, neither did they care to own it. Note, It is hard to persuade men to believe what they are not willing to find true; they are ignorant in many cases, because they are willing to be ignorant; and they do not know, because they do not care to know. But let not sinners think that such ignorance as this will be admitted as an excuse for whatever sin it may betray them into; they who crucified Christ, did not know who he was; for *had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. but, though ignorant, they were not therefore innocent; their ignorance itself was a sin, willing and wilful ignorance; and one sin can be no excuse for another: So it is here; had these known of the dreadful vengeance with which God swept away a whole world of ungodly wretches at once, they would not surely have scoffed at his threatenings of any after equally-terrible judgment; but here they were willingly ignorant; they did not know what God had done, because they had no mind to know it: Now therefore we shall proceed to consider the representation which the apostle here lays down, both of the destruction of the old world by water, and that which does await this present world at the final conflagration; he mentions the one as what God had done, to convince and persuade us the rather to believe, that the other both may be and will be: And first we begin with the apostle's account of the destruction which has once already come upon the world, ver. 5, 6. *By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.* Originally the world was otherwise situated, the waters were most wisely divided at the creation, and most beneficially for us; some of the waters had proper repositories above the firmament, here called the heavens, as it is also Gen. i. 8. and others under the firmament, gathered together unto one place; there was then both sea and dry land, a commodious habitation for the children of men; but now, at the time of the universal deluge, the case is strangely altered; the waters which God had divided before, and assigned to each part their convenient receptacles, now does he, in anger, throw together again in an heap; *he breaks up the fountains of the great deep, and throws open the windows, i. e. the clouds of heaven*, Gen. vii. 11. till the whole earth was overflowed with water, and not a spot upon the highest mountain but what was fifteen cubits under water, Gen. vii. 20. Thus he did make known at once his terrible power, and his fierce anger, and made an end of a whole world at once; *the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*, ver. 6. Is not here a change, and a most awful change! And then it is to be observed, that all this was done by the word of God; it was by his powerful word that the world was made at first, and made in so commodious and beautiful a frame and order, Heb. xi. 3. *κατὰ λόγον*. He said, *Let there be a firmament, &c.* Gen. i. 6, 7. *And let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, &c.* ver. 9, 10. Thus he spake, and it was done, Psal. xxxiii. 9. Thus, says our apostle, by the word of the Lord the heavens were, as they were of old, i. e. at the first creation, and the earth, (as it was at first a terraqueous globe) standing out of the water and in the water: Nor was it only the first frame and order of the world that is here said to be by the word of God, but the after confusion and ruin of the world, as well as the utter destruction of its inhabitants, was also by the same word; none but that God who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundation of the earth, could destroy and overthrow such a vast fabric at once: This was done by the word of his power, and it was also done according to the word of his promise; God had said that he would destroy man, even all flesh, and that he would do it by bringing a flood of waters upon the earth, Gen. vi. 7, 13, 17. This was the change which God had before brought upon the world, and which these scoffers had overlooked; and now we are to consider, in the second place, what the apostle says of the destructive change which is yet come upon it: *The heavens and the earth which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*, ver. 7. where we have an awful account of the final dissolution of the world, and which we are yet more nearly concerned in; the ruin that came upon the world, and its inhabitants by the flood, we read, and hear and think of with concern, though those who were swept away by it were such as we never knew: but the judgment here spoken of is yet to come, and will surely come, though we know not when, nor upon what particular age or generation of men; and therefore we are not, we cannot be sure that it may not happen in our own times; and this makes a very great difference, though it should be admitted that they were equal in every other respect, which yet must not be allowed (for there were some, though very few, who escaped that deluge; but not one can escape in this conflagration;) besides, that we were not in reach of the one, but are not sure that we shall not be included in the other calamity: Now therefore to see the world to which we belong destroyed at once; not a single person only, not a particular family only, nor yet a nation (even that which we are most nearly interested in and concerned for) but the whole world, I say, sinking at once, and no ark provided, no possible way left of escaping for any one from the common ruin; this makes a difference between the desolation that has been, and what we yet are to expect: The one is already past, and never to return upon us any more; for God has said expressly, *that there shall never any more be a flood to destroy the earth*, Gen. ix. 11—15. the other is still behind, and as certain to come as the truth and the power of God can make it; the one came gradually upon the world, and was growing upon its inhabitants forty days, before it made an utter end of them, Gen. vii. 12, 17. this other will come upon them swiftly and at once, 2 Pet. ii. 1. besides that there was in that overthrow (as we have said) a few who did escape, but the ruin which does yet await this world, whenever it comes, will be absolutely an universal one, not any part but what the devouring flames will seize upon, not a sanctuary left any where for the inhabitants to flee to, not a single spot in all this world where any one of them can be safe: Thus whatever differences may be assigned between that destruction of the world, and this here spoken of, do indeed represent the approaching as the most terrible judgment; yet that the world has once been destroyed by a universal deluge, does render it the more credible that it may again be ruined by a universal conflagration; let therefore the scoffers, who laugh at the coming of our Lord to judgment, at last consider that it may be; there is nothing said of it in the word of God, but what is within reach of the

power of God; and though they still should laugh, they shall not put us out of countenance; we are well assured that it will be, because he has said it, and we can depend upon his promise; they do err, not knowing (at least not believing) the scriptures, nor the power of God; but we know, and we do or ought to depend upon both: Now that which he has said and which he will certainly make good is, that *the heavens and the earth which now are*, which we are now related to, and which still subsist in all the beauty and order in which we see them, and which are so agreeable and useful to us as we find they are, they are kept in store, not to be what earthly minds would wish to have them, treasures for us; but to be what God will have them, in his treasury, securely lodged and kept safe for his purposes; it follows, they are reserved unto fire. Observe, God's following judgments are more terrible than those which went before; the old world was destroyed by water, but this is reserved unto fire, which shall burn up the wicked at the last day; and though this seems to be delayed, yet as this wicked world is upheld by the word of God, so it is only reserved for the vengeance of him to whom vengeance belongs, who will at the day of judgment deal with an ungodly world according to their deserts, for the day of judgment is the day of the perdition of ungodly men; they who now scoff at a future judgment shall find it a day of vengeance and utter destruction; beware therefore of being among these scoffers; never question but the day of the Lord will come; give diligence therefore to be found in Christ, that it may be a time of refreshment and day of redemption to you, which will be a day of indignation and wrath to the ungodly world.

8. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.

The apostle comes in these words to instruct and establish Christians in the truth of the coming of the Lord, where we may clearly discern the tenderness and affection wherewith he speaks to them, calling them beloved; he had a compassionate concern and a love of good-will for the ungodly wretches who refused to believe divine revelation, but he has a peculiar respect for the true believers, and the remaining ignorance and weakness that he apprehends to be in them make him jealous, and put him on giving them a caution: And here we may observe, 1. The truth which the apostle asserts, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Though in the account of men there is a great deal of difference between a day and a year, and a vast deal more between one day and a thousand years, yet, in the account of God, who inhabits eternity, in which there is no succession, there is no difference; for all things past, present and future, are ever before him; and the delay of a thousand years cannot be so much to him as the deferring any thing for a day or hour is to us. 2. The importance of this truth; this is the one thing the apostle would not have us ignorant of; a holy awe and reverential fear of God is necessary in order to our worshipping and glorifying him; and a belief of the inconceivable distance between him and us, is very proper to beget and maintain that religious fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom: This is a truth that belongs to our peace, and therefore he endeavours it may not be hid from our eyes; as it is in the original, *let not this one thing be hid from you*: If men have no knowledge or belief of the eternal God, they will be very apt to think him such an one as themselves: And yet how hard is it to conceive of eternity! It is therefore not very easy to attain such knowledge of God as is absolutely necessary.

In ver. 9. we are told, the Lord is not slack, he does not delay beyond the appointed time; as God kept the time that he had appointed for the delivering Israel out of Egypt to a day, Exod. xii. 41. so he will keep to the time appointed in coming to judge the world. What a difference is there between the account which God makes, and that which men make! Good men are apt to think God stays beyond the appointed time, that is, the time which they have set for their own and the church's deliverance; but they set one time, and God sets another, and he will not fail to keep the day which he has appointed: And ungodly men dare charge a culpable slackness upon God, as if he had sipped the time, and laid aside the thoughts of coming: But the apostle assures us, that what men count slackness is truly long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is a giving more time to his own people, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world, many of whom are not as yet converted, and those who are in a state of grace and favour with God, are to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works, doing and suffering what they are called to, that they may bring glory to God, and improve in a meetness for heaven; for God is not willing that any of these should perish, but that all of them should come to repentance. Here observe, 1. Repentance is absolutely necessary in order to salvation: *Except we repent we shall perish*, Luke 3. 5. 2. God has no delight in the death of sinners; as the punishment of sinners is a torment unto his creatures, a merciful God does not take pleasure in it; and though the principal design of God, in his long-suffering, is the blessedness of them whom he has chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, yet his goodness and forbearance do in their own nature invite and call to repentance all those to whom they are exercised, and if men continue impenitent when God gives them space to repent, he will deal more severely with them, though the great reason why he did not hasten his coming, was because he had not accomplished the number of his elect; abuse not therefore the patience and long-suffering of God, by abandoning yourselves to a course of ungodliness; presume not to go on boldly in the way of sinners, nor to sit down securely in an unconverted impenitent state, as he that said, Matt. xxiv. 48. *My Lord delayeth his coming*, lest he come and surprise you; for, as we read, ver. 10. the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; where we may observe,

1. The certainty of the day of the Lord; though it is now above sixteen hundred years since this epistle was written, and the day is not yet come, it assuredly will come; God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, and he will keep his appointment: It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment, Heb. ix. 27. Settle it therefore in your hearts that the day of the Lord will certainly come, and you shall certainly be called to give an account of all things done in the body, whether good or evil; and let your exact walking before God, and your frequent judging yourselves, evidence your firm belief of a future judgment, when many live as if they were never to give an account at all. 2. The sudden-

ness of this day; it will come as a thief in the night, at a time when men are sleeping and secure, and have no manner of apprehension or expectation of the day of the Lord, no more than men have of a thief when they are in a deep sleep, in the dark and silent night: At midnight there was a cry, Behold the bridegroom comes, Matt. xxv. 6. and at that time not only the foolish, but also the wise virgins slumbered and slept. The Lord will come in a day when we look not for him, and an hour when men are not aware: That time which men think to be the most improper and unlikely; and therefore are most secure, will be the time of the Lord's coming: Let us then beware how we in our thoughts and imaginations put that day far away from us; but rather suppose it to be so much nearer in reality, by how much farther off it is in the opinion of the ungodly world. 3. The solemnity of this coming; (1.) The heavens shall pass away with a great noise; the visible heavens, as unable to abide when the Lord shall come in his glory, shall pass away; they shall undergo a mighty alteration, and this shall be very sudden, and with such a noise as the breaking and tumbling down of so great a fabric must necessarily occasion. (2.) The elements shall melt with fervent heat: At this coming of the Lord, it shall not only be very tempestuous round about him, so that the very heavens shall pass away as in a mighty violent storm, but a fire shall go before him that shall melt the elements of which the creatures are composed. (3.) The earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up: The earth, and its inhabitants, and all the works, whether of nature or art, shall be destroyed: The stately palaces and gardens, and all the desirable things wherein worldly-minded men did seek and place their happiness, all of them shall be burnt up; all sorts of creatures which God has made, and all the works of men must submit, all must pass through the fire, which shall be a consuming fire to all that sin has brought into the world; though it may be but a refining fire to the works of God's hand, that the glass of the creation being made much brighter, the saints may much better discern the glory of the Lord therein.

And now who can but observe what a difference there will be between the first coming of Christ and the second? and yet that is called the great and dreadful day of the Lord, Mal. iv. 5. How much more dreadful must this coming to judgment be! May we be so wise as to prepare for it, that it may not be a day of vengeance and destruction unto us: O! what will become of us if we set our affections on this earth, and make it our portion, seeing all these things shall be burnt up? Look out therefore, and make sure of a happiness beyond this visible world, which must all be melted down.

11. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. 12. Looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless: 15. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation: even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; 16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

The apostle having instructed them in the doctrine of Christ's second coming, he takes occasion thence to exhort them to purity and godliness in their whole conversation; all the truths which are revealed in scripture, should be improved for our advancement in practical godliness; this is the effect that knowledge must produce, or we are never the better for it: If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Seeing all these things must be dissolved, how holy should we be that are assured of it, departing from and dying to sin, that has so corrupted and defiled all the visible creation, that there is an absolute need of its dissolution? All that was made for man's use is subject to vanity by man's sin; and if the sin of man has brought the visible heavens, and the elements and earth under a curse from which they cannot be freed without being dissolved, what an abominable evil is sin, and how much to be hated by us! And inasmuch as this dissolution is in order to their being restored to their primitive beauty and excellency, how pure and holy should we be, in order to our being fit for the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness? It is a very exact and universal holiness that he exhorts to, not resting in any lower measure or degree, but labouring to be eminent beyond what is commonly attained holy in God's house and in our own; holy in our worshipping of God, and in our conversing with men; all our conversations, whether with high or low, rich or poor, good or bad, friends or enemies, must be holy; we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world in all our converse with it; we must be perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and in the love of God too: we must exercise ourselves unto godliness of all sorts, in all its parts, trusting in God and delighting in God only, who continues the same when the whole visible creation shall be dissolved; devoting ourselves to the service of God, and designing the glorifying and enjoyment of God who endures for ever; whereas what worldly men delight in and follow after, must all be dissolved; these things which we now see, must in a little while pass away, and be no more as they now are; look therefore at what shall abide and continue, which, though it is not present, is certain and not far off; this looking for the day of God, is one of the directions the apostle gives us, in order to our being eminently holy and godly in all manner of conversation; look for the day of God as what you firmly believe shall come, and what you earnestly long for; the coming of the day of God is what every Christian must hope for and earnestly expect; for it is a day when Christ shall appear in the glory of the Father, and evidence his divinity and Godhead even to those who counted him a mere man: The first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he appeared in the form of a servant, was what the people of God did earnestly wait and look for; that coming was for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 25. How much more should they wait with expectation and earnestness

for the second coming, which will be the day of their complete redemption, and of his most glorious manifestation! then he shall come to be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe: For though it cannot but terrify and fright the ungodly to see the visible heavens all in a flame, and the elements melting, yet the believer, whose faith is the evidence of things not seen, can rejoice in hope of more glorious heavens after these have been melted and refined by that dreadful fire which shall burn up all the dross of this visible creation. Here we must take notice, 1. What true Christians look for, and that is new heavens and a new earth, in which a great deal more of the wisdom, power, and goodness of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ will be clearly discerned than we are able to discover in what we now see; for in these new heavens and earth, freed from the vanity the former were subject to; and the sin they were polluted with, only righteousness shall dwell; this is to be the habitation of such righteous persons who do righteousness, and are free from the power and pollution of sin; all the wicked shall be turned into hell; those only who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, shall be admitted to dwell in this holy place. 2. What is the ground and foundation of this expectation and hope, it is the promise of God, to look for any thing which God has not promised is presumption, but if our expectations are according to the promise, both as to the things we look for, and the time and way of their being brought about, we cannot meet with a disappointment; for he is faithful who has promised. See therefore that you raise and regulate your expectations of all the great things that are to come according to the word of God, and as to the new heaven and the new earth, look for them as God has allowed and directed by the passages we have in this portion of scripture now before you, and in Isa. lxxv. 17. — lxxvi. 22. to which the apostle may be thought to allude.

As in ver. 11. he exhorts to holiness from the consideration that the heavens and earth shall be dissolved, so in ver. 14. he resumes his exhortation from the consideration that they shall be again renewed: Seeing you expect the day of God; when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear in his glorious majesty, and these heavens and earth shall be dissolved and melted down, and being purified and refined, shall be erected and rebuilt, prepare to meet him: It nearly concerns us to see in what state we are when the judge of all the world comes to pass sentence upon men, and to determine how it shall be with them to all eternity; this is the court of judicature whence there lies no appeal; whatever sentence is here passed by this great Judge is irreversible; therefore get ready to appear before the judgment seat of Christ: And see to it, (1.) That you are found of him in peace, in a state of peace and reconciliation with God through Christ, in whom alone God is reconciling the world to himself; and all that are out of Christ are in a state of enmity, and reject and oppose the Lord and his anointed, and shall therefore be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power: They, whose sins are pardoned and their peace made with God, are the only safe and happy people; therefore follow after peace, and that with all: 1. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Peace in our own consciences through the Spirit of grace witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: 3. Peace with men, by having a calm and peaceable disposition wrought in us, resembling that of our blessed Lord. (2.) That we be found of Christ without spot and blameless; follow after holiness as well as peace: and even spotless and perfect; not only take heed of all spots which are not the spots of God's children, this only prevents our being found of men without spot, but we must be found of Christ without spot, we must be pressing towards spotless purity, absolute perfection; Christians must be perfecting holiness, that they may be not only blameless before men, but also in the sight of God; and all this deserves and needs the greatest diligence; he that does this work negligently can never do it successfully: never expect to be found at that day of God in peace, if you are lazy and idle in this your day, in which we must finish the work that is given us to do: It is only the diligent Christian that will be the happy Christian in the day of the Lord: Our Lord will suddenly come to us, or shortly call us to him, and would you have him find you idle? Remember there is a curse denounced against him who does the work of the Lord negligently, Jer. xlviii. 10. Heaven will be a sufficient recompence for all our diligence and industry, therefore let us labour and take pains in the work of the Lord; he will certainly reward us if we be diligent in the work he has allotted us; now, that you may be diligent, account the long suffering of our Lord to be salvation: Does your Lord delay his coming? Do not think this is to give more time to make provision for your lusts to gratify them; it is so much space to repent and work out your salvation. It proceeds not from a want of concern or compassion for his suffering servants, nor is it designed to give countenance and encouragement to the world of the ungodly, but that men may have time to prepare for eternity. Learn then to make a right use of the patience of our Lord, who does as yet delay his coming. Follow after peace and holiness, or else his coming will be dreadful unto you: And inasmuch as it is difficult to prevent men's abuse of God's patience, and engage them in the right improvement thereof, our apostle quotes St. Paul as directing men to make the same good use of the divine forbearance, that in the mouth or from the pen of two apostles the truth might be confirmed. And we may here observe with what esteem and affection he speaks of him, who had formerly publicly withstood and sharply reproved St. Peter: If a righteous man smite one that is truly religious, it shall be received as a kindness; and let him reprove, it shall be as an excellent oil which shall soften and sweeten the good man that is reproved when he does amiss. What an honourable mention does this apostle of the circumcision make of that very man, who had openly, before all, reproved him, as not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel? 1. He calls him brother, whereby he means not only that he is a fellow Christian, in which sense the word brethren is used, i Thess. v. 27. or a fellow-preacher, in which sense St. Paul calls Timothy the evangelist a brother, Col. i. 1. but a fellow-apostle, one who had the same extraordinary commission, immediately from Christ himself, to preach the gospel in every place, and to disciple all nations. Though many seducing teachers denied Paul's apostleship, yet St. Peter owns him to be an apostle. 2. He calls him beloved, and they being both alike commissioned, and both united in the same service of the same Lord, it would have been very unseemly if they had not been united in affection to one another, for the strengthening one another's hands, mutually desirous of and rejoicing in one another's success. 3. He mentions St. Paul as one who had an uncommon measure of wisdom given unto him. He was a person of eminent knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, and did neither in that or any other qualification come behind any of all the other apostles. How desirable is it, that those who preach the same gospel would treat one another according to the pattern St. Peter here sets them? It is surely their duty to endeavour, by proper methods, to prevent or remove all prejudices that hinder ministers usefulness, and to beget and improve that esteem and respect in the minds of people toward their ministers, as they promote the success of their labours. And let us also here observe, 1. The excellent wisdom that was in St. Paul is said to be given him. That understanding and knowledge that qualifies men to preach the gospel, is the gift of God. We must seek for knowledge, and labour to get understanding, in hopes that it shall be given us from above, while we are diligent

diligent in using proper means to attain it. 2. The apostle imparts to men according as he had received from God. He endeavours to lead others as far as he himself was led into the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. He is not an intruder into those things he had not seen or been fully assured of, and yet he does not fail to declare the whole counsel of God, *Acts* xx. 27. 3. The epistles which were written by the apostle of the Gentiles, and directed to those Gentiles who believed in Christ, are designed for the instruction and edification of those who from among the Jews were brought to believe in Christ; for it is generally thought what is here alluded to is contained in the epistle to the Romans, *chap. ii. ver. 4.* though in all his epistles there are some things that refer to one or other of the subjects treated of in this and the foregoing chapter; and it cannot seem strange that those who were pursuing the same general design, should in their epistles insist upon the same things. But the apostle Peter proceeds to tell us, that in those things, which are to be met with in St. Paul's epistles, there are some things hard to be understood. Among the variety of subjects treated of in scripture, some are not easy to be understood, because of their own obscurity, such are prophecies; others cannot be so easily understood, because of their excellency and sublimeness, as the mysterious doctrines; and others are with difficulty taken in, because of the weakness of men's minds, such are the things of the Spirit of God, mentioned, *1 Cor. ii. 14.* And here the unlearned and unstable make wretched work; for they wrest and torture the scriptures to make them speak what the Holy Ghost did not intend. Those who are not well instructed and well established in the truth, are in great danger of perverting the word of God. They who have heard and learned of the Father, are best secured from misunderstanding and misapplying any part of the word of God; and where there is a divine power to establish as well as to instruct men in divine truth, persons are effectually secured from falling into errors. And how great a blessing is this, we learn by observing what is the pernicious consequence of the errors that ignorant and unstable men fall into, even their own destruction. Errors in particular concerning the holiness and justice of God are the utter ruin of multitudes of men. Let us therefore earnestly pray for the Spirit of God to instruct us in the truth, that we may know it as it is in Jesus, and have our hearts established with grace, that we may stand firm and unshaken, even in the most stormy times, when others are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

In *ver. 17.* the apostle gives them a word of caution, where he intimates, that the knowledge we have of these things should make us very wary and watchful, inasmuch as there is a twofold danger. 1. *We are in great danger of being seduced,* and turned away from the truth. The unlearned and unstable, and they are very numerous, do generally wrest the scripture. Many

who have the scriptures and read them, do not understand what they read; and too many of those who have a right understanding of the sense and meaning of the word, are not established in the belief of the truth, and all these are liable to fall into error. Few attain to the knowledge and acknowledgment of doctrinal Christianity, and fewer find, so as to keep in the way of practical godliness, which is the narrow way, which only leadeth unto life. There must be a great deal of self-denial and suspicion of ourselves, and submitting to the authority of Christ Jesus our great prophet, before we can heartily receive all the truths of the gospel, and therefore we are in great danger of rejecting the truth. 2. *We are in great danger of being seduced.* For, 1. So far as we are turned from the truth, so far are we turned out of the way to true blessedness, into the path which leads to destruction. If men corrupt the word of God, it tends to their own utter ruin. 2. When men wrest the word of God, they fall into the error of the wicked, men without law, that keep to no rules, set no bounds to themselves, a sort of free thinkers, which the psalmist does detest, *Psal. cxix. 113. I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.* Whatever opinions and thoughts of men are not conformable to the law of God, and warranted by it, the good man does disclaim and abhor; they are the conceits and counsels of the ungodly, who have forsaken God's law, and if we imitate their opinions, we shall too soon imitate their practices. 3. They who are led away by error fall from their own steadfastness. They are wholly unhinged and unsettled, and know not where to rest, but are at the greatest uncertainty, like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. It nearly concerns us therefore to be upon our guard, seeing the danger is so great.

Now that we may the better avoid being led away, the apostle, *ver. 18.* directs us what to do. And, 1. *We must grow in grace.* He had in the beginning of the epistle exhorted us to add one grace to another, and here he advises us to grow in all grace, in faith, and virtue and knowledge. By how much the stronger grace is in us, by so much the more steadfast shall we be in the truth. 2. *We must grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Follow on to know the Lord. Labour to know him more clearly and more fully, to know more of Christ, and to know him to better purpose, so as to be more like him, and to love him better. This is the knowledge of Christ the apostle Paul did reach after, and desire to attain to, *Phil. iii. 10.* Such a knowledge of Christ as conforms us more to him, and endears him more to us, must needs be of great use to us to preserve us from falling off in times of general apostasy; and they who experience this effect of the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will upon receiving such grace from him give thanks and praise to him, and join with our apostle in saying, *To him be glory for now and for ever. Amen.*

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

By Mr. T. Reynolds

Though the continued tradition of the church attests that this epistle came from St. John the apostle, yet we may observe some other evidence that will confirm (or with some perhaps even outweigh) the certainty of that tradition. It should seem, that the penman was one of the apostolical college, by the sensible palpable assurance he had of the truth of the Mediator's person in his human nature; that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, *ver. 1.* He here takes notice of the evidence the Lord gave to Thomas of his resurrection, by calling him to feel the prints of the nails and of the spear, which is recorded by John. And he must be one of the disciples present, when the Lord came on the same day in which he arose from the dead, and shewed them his hands and his side, *John xx. 20.* But, that we may be assured which apostle this was, there is scarce a critic or competent judge of diction, or stile of argument and spirit, but will adjudge this epistle to the writer of that gospel that bears the name of the apostle John. They wonderfully agree in the titles and characters of the Redeemer; *the word, the life, the light; his name was the Word of God.* Compare *1 John i. 1.* and *chap. v. 7.* with *John i. 1* and *Rev. xix. 13.* in the commendation of God's love to us, *1 John iii. 1.* and *chap. iv. 9.* *John ii. 16.* in speaking of our regeneration, or being born of God; *1 Epist. iii. 9.* *chap. iv. 7.* and *chap. v. 1.* *John iii. 5, 6.* Lastly (to add no more instances, which may be easily seen in comparing this epistle with that gospel) in the allusion to, or application of that passage in that gospel, which relates (and which only relates) the issuing of water and blood out of the Redeemer's opened side: *This is he that came by water and blood,* *chap. v. 6.* Thus the epistle plainly appears to flow from the same pen as that gospel did. Now I know not that the text, or the intrinsic history of any of the gospels, gives us such assurance of its writer or penman, as that ascribed to John plainly does. There (*viz. chap. xxi. 24.*) the sacred historian thus notifies himself; *this is the disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.* Now who is this disciple, but he concerning whom Peter asked, *what shall this man do?* And concerning whom the Lord answered, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* *ver. 22.* And who, in *ver. 20.* is described by these three characters: 1. *That he is the disciple whom Jesus loved.* (The Lord's peculiar friend.) 2. *That he also leaned on his breast at supper.* 3. *That he said unto him, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?* As sure then as it is that that disciple was John, so sure may the church be that that gospel and this epistle came from the beloved John.

The epistle is stiled general, as being not inscribed to any particular church; it is as a circular letter (or a visitation charge) sent to divers churches (some say of Parthia) in order to confirm them in their steadfast adherence to the Lord Christ, and the sacred doctrine concerning his person and office, against seducers; and to instigate them to adorn that doctrine by love to God and man; and particularly to each other, as being descended from God, united by the same head, and travelling towards the same eternal life.

C H A P. I.

Evidence given concerning Christ's person and excellency, *ver. 1, 2.* The knowledge thereof gives us communion with God and Christ, *ver. 3.* And joy, *ver. 4.* A description of God, *ver. 5.* How we are thereupon to walk, *ver. 6.* The benefit of such walkings, *ver. 7.* The way to forgiveness, *ver. 9.* The evil of denying our sin, *ver. 8, 9, 10.*

1. **T**HAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; 2. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father,

Father, and was manifested unto us). 3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

The apostle omits his name and character (as also the author to the Hebrews does) either out of humility, or as being willing that the Christian reader should be swayed by the light and weight of the things wrote, rather than by the name that might recommend them. And so he begins,

1. With an account or character of the Mediator's person. He is the great subject of the gospel: the foundation and object of our faith and hope; the bond and cement that unites us unto God. He should be well known; and he is represented here, 1. *As the word of life*, ver. 1. In the gospel these two are disjoined, and he is called first, *The word*, ver. 1. and afterward *life*, intimating withal, that he is *intellectual life*. In him was *life*, and that *life* was (efficiently and objectively) *the light of men*, ver. 4. Here both are conjoined; *the word of life*: The vital word. In that he is the word, it is intimated, that he is the word of some person or other; and that is God, even the Father. *He is the word of God*, and so he is intimated to issue from the Father, as truly (though not in the same manner) as a word (or speech, which is a train of words) from a speaker. But he is not a mere vocal word, (a bare λόγος ὁμιλικός) but a vital one. *The word of life*; the living word. And thereupon, 2. *As eternal life*. His duration shews his excellency. He was from eternity; and so is, in scripture-account, necessary, essential, uncreated life. That the apostle speaks of his eternity, *a parte ante*, (as they say) and as from everlasting, seems evident in that he speaks of him, as he was in and from the beginning; when he was then with the Father, before his manifestation to us, yea before the making of all things that were made; as *John* 1. 2, 3. So that he is the eternal, vital, intellectual word of the eternal living Father. 3. *As life manifested*, ver. 2. Manifested in the flesh; manifested to us. The eternal life would assume mortality; would put on flesh and blood (in the entire human nature) and so dwell among us, and converse with us, *John* 1. 14. He was condescension and kindness indeed, that eternal life (a person of eternal, essential life) should come to visit mortals, and to procure eternal life for them, and then confer it on them!

2. With the evidence and convictive assurances that the apostle and his brethren had of the Mediator's presence and converse in the world, there were sufficient demonstrations of the reality of his abode here, and of the excellency and dignity of his person in the way of his manifestation. *The life, the word of life, the eternal life*, as such, could not be seen and felt; but the life manifested might be, and was so. The life was clothed with flesh; put on the state and habit of abased human nature; and, as such, gave sensible proof of its existence and transactions here. The divine life, or word incarnate, presented and evinced itself to the very senses of the apostles. As, 1. To their ears. *That which we have heard*, ver. 1—3. The life assumed a mouth and tongue, that he might utter words of life. The apostles not only heard of him, but they heard him himself. Above three years might they attend his ministry and be auditors of his public sermons and private expositions, (for he expounded them in the house) and be charmed with the words of him that spake as never man spake before or since. The divine word would employ the ear, and the ear should be devoted to the word of life. And it was meet, that they that were to be his representatives and imitators to the world, should be personally acquainted with his ministrations. 2. To their eyes. *That which we have seen with our eyes*, ver. 1, 2, 3. The word would become visible; would not only be heard, but be seen; seen publicly, privately, at distance, and at nearest approach; which may be intimated in the expression, *with our eyes*; with all the use and exercise that we could make of our eyes. We saw him in his life and ministry; saw him in his transfiguration on the mount, hanging, bleeding, dying and dead upon the cross; and we saw him after his return from the grave and resurrection from the dead. His apostles must be eye-witnesses as well as ear-witnesses of him. *Wherefore, of these men that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection*, Acts i. 21, 22. And we were eye-witnesses of his majesty, 1 *Pet.* i. 16. 3. To their internal sense; to the eyes of their mind; for so (possibly) may the next clause be interpreted, *which we have looked upon*. This may be distinguished from the foregoing perception, *seeing with the eyes*; and may be the same with what the apostle says in his gospel, chap. i. 14. and *we beheld, ἰδὲν αὐτὸν, his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. Where the word is not applied to the immediate object of the eye, but that was rationally collected from what they saw. What we have well discerned, contemplated, and viewed: What we have well known of this word of life, we report to you. The senses are to be the informers of the mind. 4. To their hands and sense of feeling. *And our hands have handled (touched and felt) of the word of life*. This surely refers to the full conviction our Lord afforded his apostles of the truth, reality, solidity, and organization of his body, after his resurrection from the dead. When he shewed them his hands and his side, it is probable he gave them leave to touch him; at least he knew of Thomas's unbelief, and his professed resolution too, not to believe, till he had found and felt the places and signatures of the wounds by which he died. Accordingly, at the next congress he called Thomas, in the presence of the rest, to satisfy the very curiosity of his unbelief. And probably others of them did so too. *Our hands have handled of the word of life*. The invisible life and word was no despiser of the testimony of sense. Sense in its place and sphere, is a means that God hath appointed, and the Lord Christ hath employed for our information. Our Lord took care to satisfy (as far as might be) all the senses of his apostles, that they might be the more authentic witnesses of him to the world. They that apply all this to the law and the gospel, lose the variety of sensations here mentioned in the propriety of the expressions and the reason of their inculcation and repetition here. I say, *that which we have seen and heard, and found, declare we unto you*, ver. 3. The apostles could not be deceived in such long and various exercise of their sense. Sense must minister to reason and judgment; and reason and judgment must minister to the reception of the Lord Christ and his gospel. The rejection of the Christian revelation is at last resolved into the rejection of sense itself. *He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed them not who had seen him after he was risen*, Mark xvi. 14.

3. With a solemn assertion and attestation of these grounds and evidences of the Christian truth and doctrine, the apostles publish these assurances for our satisfaction. *We bear witness, and shew unto you*, ver. 2. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you*, ver. 3. It became the apostles to open to the disciples the evidence by which they were led; the reasons by which they were constrained to proclaim and propagate the Christian doctrine in the world. Wisdom and integrity obliged them to demonstrate that it was not either private fancy, or cunningly devised fable that they

presented to the world. Evident truth would open their mouths and force a public profession. *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*, Acts iv. 20. It concerned the disciples to be well assured of the truth of the institution they had embraced. They should see the evidences of their holy religion. It fears not the light nor the most judicious examination. It is able to afford rational conviction, and solid persuasion of mind and conscience. *I would that ye knew what great conflict I have (or concern of mind) for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be knit together in love; and unto all riches of full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ*, Col. ii. 1, 2.

4. With the reason of the apostle's exhibiting and asserting this summary of sacred faith, and this breviate of evidence attending it. And this reason is twofold.

1. That the believers of it may be advanced to the same happiness with them; (with the apostles themselves.) *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us*, ver. 3. The apostle means not personal fellowship or consociation in the same church-administrations; but such as is consistent with personal distance from each other. It is communion with heaven, and in blessings that come from thence and tend thither. This we declare and testify, that you may share with us in our privileges and happiness. Gospel spirits (or those that are made happy by gospel grace) would fain have others happy too. We see also, there is a fellowship or communion that runs through the whole church of God. There may be some personal distinctions and peculiarities, but there is a communion (or common participation of privilege and dignity) belonging to all saints, from the highest apostle to the lowest believer. As there is the same precious faith, there are the same precious promises dignifying and crowning that faith, and the same precious blessings and glories enriching and filling those promises. Now that believers may be ambitious of this communion, that they may be instigated to retain and hold fast that faith that is the means of such communion, that the apostles also may manifest their love to the disciples in assisting them to the same communion with themselves, they indicate what it is and where it is. *And truly our fellowship (or communion) is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ*. We have communion with the Father, and with the Son of the Father (as 2 *Epist.* ver. 3. he is most emphatically styled) in our happy relation to him, in our receiving heavenly blessings from them, and in our spiritual converse with them. We have now such supernatural conversation with God and the Lord Christ, as is an earnest and foretaste of our everlasting abode with them, and enjoyment of them in the heavenly glory. See whether the gospel revelation tends, to advance us far above sin and earth, and to carry us to blessed communion with the Father and the Son. See for what end the eternal life was made flesh, viz. That he might advance us to eternal life in communion with the Father and himself. See how far they live beneath the dignity, use and end of the Christian faith and institution, that have not spiritual, blessed communion with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ.

2. That believers may be enlarged and advanced in holy joy. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*, ver. 4. The gospel dispensation is not properly a dispensation of fear, sorrow and dread, but of peace and joy. Terror and astonishment may well attend mount Sinai but exultation and joy mount Zion; where appears the eternal word, the eternal life manifested in our flesh. The mystery of the Christian religion is directly calculated for the joy of mortals. It should be joy to us that the eternal Son should come to seek and save us, that he has made a full atonement for our sins; that he has conquered sin and death and hell; that he lives as our intercessor and advocate with the Father; and that he will come again to perfect and glorify his persevering believers. And therefore they live beneath the use and end of the Christian revelation, that are not filled with spiritual joy. Believers should rejoice in their happy relation to God, as his sons and heirs, his beloved and adopted. In their happy relation to the Son of the Father, as being members of his beloved body, and coheirs with himself; in the pardon of their sins, in the sanctification of their natures, in the adoption of their persons, in the prospect of grace and glory that will be revealed at the return of their Lord and head from heaven. Were they confirmed in their holy faith, how would they rejoice? *The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost*, Acts xiii. 52.

5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The apostle having declared the truth and dignity of the author of the gospel, brings a message or report from him; from which, just conclusion is to be drawn for the consideration and conviction of the professors of religion, or professed entertainers of this glorious gospel.

1. Here is the message or report that the apostle avers to come from the Lord Jesus: *This then is the message which we have heard of him*, ver. 5. of his Son Jesus Christ. As he was the immediate sender of the apostles, so he is the principal person spoken of in the precedent context, and the next antecedent also to whom the article [*him*] can relate. The apostles and apostolical ministers are the messengers of the Lord Jesus; it is their honour, the chief they pretend to, to bring his mind and messages to the world and to the churches. This is the wisdom and present dispensation of the Lord Jesus to send his messages to us by persons like ourselves. He that put on human nature will honour earthen vessels. It was the ambition of the apostles to be found faithful, and faithfully to deliver the errands and messages they had received. What was communicated to them they were solicitous to impart. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you*. A message from the word of life, from the eternal word, we should gladly receive: And the present one is this; relating to the nature of God, whom we are to serve, and with whom we should covet all indulged communion: *That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, ver. 5. This report asserts the excellency of the divine nature. He is all that beauty and perfection that can be represented to us by light. He is self-active, uncompounded spirituality, purity, wisdom, holiness, and glory; and then the absoluteness and fulness of that excellency and perfection. There is no defect or imperfection, no mixture of any thing alien or contrary to absolute excellency, no mutability or capacity of any decay in him. *In him is no darkness at all*, ver. 5. Or this report may more immediately relate to (what is usually called) the moral perfection of the divine nature; what we are to imitate, or what is more directly to influence us in our gospel work. And so it will comprehend the holiness of God, the absolute purity

purity of his nature and will; his penetrative knowledge, (particularly of hearts) his jealousy and justice, which burns us a most bright and vehement flame. It is meet, that to this dark world the great God should be represented as pure and perfect light. It is the Lord Jesus that best of all opens to us the nature and nature of the unsearchable God. *The only begotten, that is in the bosom of the Father, the same hath declared him.* It is the prerogative of the Christian revelation to bring us the most noble, the most august and agreeable account of the blessed God; such as is most suitable to the light of reason, and what is demonstrable thereby; most suitable to the magnificence of his works round about us, and to the nature and office of him that is the supreme administrator, governor, and judge of the world. What more (relating to and comprehensive of all such perfection) could be concluded in one word than in this, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Then,

2. There is a just conclusion to be drawn from this message and report; and that for the consideration and conviction of professors of religion, or professed entertainers of this gospel. And this conclusion issues into two branches. 1. For the conviction of such professors as have no true fellowship with God. *If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* It is known, that to walk, in scripture account, is to order and frame the course and actions of the moral life, i. e. of the life so far as it is capable of subjection to the divine law. *To walk in darkness,* is to live and act according to such ignorance, error, and erroneous practice, as is contrary to the fundamental dictates of holy religion. Now there may be those that may pretend to great attainments and enjoyments in religion: They may profess to have communion with God; and yet their lives may be irreligious, immoral and impure. To such the apostle would not fear to give the lie: *They lie, and do not the truth.* They belye God; for he holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls. What communion hath light with darkness? They belye themselves, or lie concerning themselves; so they have no such communications from God, nor access to him. There is neither truth in their profession nor practice; or their practice gives their profession and pretences the lie, and demonstrates the folly and falsehood of them. 2. For the conviction, evincion, and consequent satisfaction of those that are near to God. *But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* As the blessed God is the eternal, boundless light, and the mediator is from him, the light of the world; so the Christian institution is the great luminary that appears in our sphere, and shines here below. A conformity to this in spirit and practice, demonstrates fellowship or communion with God. They that so walk, shew that they know God, that they have received of the Spirit of God, and that the divine impress or image is stamped upon their souls. *Then we have fellowship one with another.* They with us, and we with them, and both with God, in his blessed or beatific communications to us. And this is one of those beatific communications to us, that his Son's blood or death is applied or imputed to us. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* The eternal life, the eternal Son hath put on flesh and blood, and so became Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ hath shed his blood for us, or died to wash us from our sins in his own blood. His blood applied to us dischargeth us from the guilt of all sin, both original and actual, inherent and committed; and so far we stand righteous in his sight: And not only so, but his blood procures for us those sacred influences by which sin is to be subdued more and more, till it is quite abolished; Gal. iii. 13, 14.

8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The apostle having supposed, that even they of this heavenly communion, have yet their sin, proceeds here to justify that supposition; and that he does by shewing the dreadful consequences of denying it; and that in two particulars. 1. *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,* ver. 8. We must beware of self-deceit. We must beware of deceiving ourselves in denying or excusing our sins. The more we see them, the more we shall esteem and value the remedy. *If we deny them, the truth is not in us:* Either the truth that is contrary to such denial; we lie in denying our sin; or the truth of religion is not in us. The Christian religion is the religion of sinners; of such as have sinned, and in whom sin in some measure still dwells. The Christian life is a life of continued repentance, humiliation for and mortification of sin; of continual faith in, thankfulness for, and love to the Redeemer, and hopeful joyful expectation of a day of glorious redemption, in which the believer shall be fully and finally acquitted, and sin abolished for ever. 2. *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us,* ver. 10. The denial of our sin does not only deceive ourselves, but reflect dishonour upon God. It challenges his veracity. He has abundantly testified of and testified against the sin of the world. *And the Lord said in his heart,* (i. e. determined thus with himself) *I will not again curse the ground (as he had then lately done) for man's sake; for (or with the learned bishop Patrick) though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,* Gen. viii. 21. But God has given his testimony to the continued sin and sinfulness of the world, by his providing a sufficient effectual sacrifice for sin, that will be needed in all ages; and to the continued sinfulness of believers themselves, by requiring them continually to confess their sins, and apply themselves, by faith to the blood of that sacrifice. And therefore, if we say either that we have not sinned, or do not yet sin, *the word of God is not in us,* either in our minds, as to the acquaintance we should have with it, or in our hearts, as to the practical influence it should have upon us.

The apostle then instructs the believer in the way to the continued pardon of his sin. Where we have, 1. His duty in order thereto. *If we confess our sins,* ver. 9. Penitent confession and acknowledgment of sin is the believer's business, and the means of his deliverance from his guilt. And, 2. His encouragement thereto, and assurance of the happy issue. This is the veracity, righteousness and clemency of God, to whom he makes such confession. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,* ver. 9. God is faithful to his covenant and word, who has therein promised forgiveness to penitent believing confessors. He is just to himself and his glory, has provided such a sacrifice, by which his righteousness is declared in the justification of sinners. He is just to his Son, who has (not only sent him for such service, but) promised to him, that those that come through him shall be forgiven on his account. *By his knowledge (by the believing apprehension of him) shall my righteous servant justify many,* Isa. liii. 11. He is clement and gracious also, and so will forgive, to the contrite confessor, all his sins, cleanse him from the guilt of all unrighteousness, and in due time deliver him from the power and practice of it.

C H A P. II.

Here the apostle encourages against sins of infirmity, ver. 4, 2. Shews the true knowledge and love of God, ver. 3—6. Renews the precept of fraternal love, ver. 7—11. Addresses to the several ages of Christians, ver. 12, 13, 14. Warns against worldly love, ver. 15, 16, 17. Against seducers, ver. 18, 19. Shews the security of true Christians, ver. 20—27. And advises to abide in Christ, ver. 28, 29.

1. **M**Y little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

These verses relate to the concluding subject of the foregoing chapter, in which the apostle proceeds upon the supposition of the real Christian's sin. And here he gives them both dissuasion and support. 1. Dissuasion. He would leave no room for sin. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not,* ver. 1. The design and purport of this letter, the design of what I have newly said concerning communion with God, and the overthrow of it by an irreligious course, is to dissuade and drive you from sin. See the familiar loving compellation with which he introduces his admonition: *My little children!* Children, as having perhaps been begotten by his gospel. *Little children!* as being much beneath him in age and experience. *My little children!* as being dear to him in the bonds of the gospel. Certainly the gospel most prevailed where and when such ministerial love most abounded; or perhaps the judicious reader will find reason to think that the apostle's meaning in this dissuasion or caution is this, or amounts to this reading: *These things write I unto you, not that ye sin.* And so the words will look back to what he had said before concerning the assured pardon of sin; *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, &c. chap. i. 9.* And so the words are a preclusion of all abuse of such favour and indulgence. Though sins will be forgiven to penitent confessors, yet this I write, not to encourage you in sin, but upon another account, or this clause will look forward to what the apostle is going to say about the advocate for sinners; and so it is a prolepsis, a prevention of like mistake or abuse. *These things write I unto you, not that ye sin,* but that ye may see your remedy for sin. And so the following particle (as the learned know) may be rendered adverbially. *But if a man sin* he may know his help and cure. And so we see, 2. The believer's support and relief in case of sin. *And (or but) if any man sin,* (any of us, or of our forefathers communion) *we have an advocate with the Father, &c. ver. 1.* Believers themselves, those that are advanced to an happy gospel state, have yet their sins. There is a great distinction therefore between the sinners that are in the world. There are christianized (such as are instated in the sacred, saving privileges of Christ's mystical or spiritual body) and unchristianized; converted and unconverted sinners. There are some who, though they really sin, yet in comparison with others are said not to sin, as chap. iii. 9. Believers, as they have had an atonement applied unto them at their entrance into a state of pardon and justification, so they have an advocate in heaven still to continue to them that state, and procure their continued pardon and forgiveness. And this must be the support, satisfaction, and refuge of believers (or real Christians) in or upon their sins. *We have an advocate;* the original name is sometimes given to the Holy Ghost; and then it is rendered, *the Comforter.* He acts within us; he put pleas and arguments into our hearts and mouths; and so is our advocate, by teaching us to intercede for ourselves. But here is an advocate without us in heaven and with the Father. The proper office and business of an advocate is with the judge; with him he pleads the client's cause. The judge with whom our advocate pleads is the Father; his Father and ours. He that was our judge in the legal court (the court of the violated law) is our Father in the gospel court, the court of heaven and of grace. His throne or tribunal is the mercy-seat. And he that is our Father is also our Judge; the supreme arbitrator of our state and circumstances, either for life or death, for time or eternity. *Ye are come—to God, the judge of all,* Heb. xii. 23. That believers may be encouraged to hope that their cause will go well, as their judge is represented to them in the relation of a Father, so their advocate is recommended to them upon these considerations: 1. By his person and personal names. *It is Jesus Christ the Son of the Father;* one anointed by the Father for the whole office of mediation, the whole work of salvation; and consequently for that of the intercessor or advocate. 2. By his qualification for the office. *It is Jesus Christ the righteous;* the righteous one in the court and sight of the judge. This is not so necessary in another advocate. Another advocate (or an advocate in another court) may be an unjust person himself, and yet may have a just cause (and the cause of a just person in that case) to plead, and may accordingly carry his cause. But here the clients are guilty; their innocence and legal righteousness cannot be pleaded; their sin must be confessed or supposed. It is the advocate's own righteousness that he must plead for the criminals. He has been righteous to the death: righteous for them, brought in everlasting righteousness. This the judge will not deny. Upon this score he pleads; that the clients sins may be disimputed, and discounted to them. 3. By the plea he has to make; the ground and basis of his advocacy. *And he is the propitiation for our sins,* ver. 2. He is the expiatory victim, the propitiatory sacrifice that has been offered to the judge for all our offences against his majesty and law and government. In vain do the professors of Rome distinguish between an advocate of redemption and an advocate of intercession; or a mediator of such different service. The mediator of intercession, the advocate for us is the mediator of redemption, the propitiation for our sins. It is his propitiation that he pleads. And we might be apt to suppose, that his blood had lost its value and efficacy, were no mention made of it in heaven since the time it was shed. But now we see that it is of esteem there, since it is continually represented in the intercession of the great Advocate (the Attorney-General) for the church of God. *He ever loves to make intercession for those that come to God through him.* 4. By the extent of his plea; the latitude of his propitiation. It is not confined to one nation; and not particularly to the ancient Israel of God. *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only* (not only for the sins of us Jews; us, that are Abraham's seed according to the flesh) *but also for those of the whole world,* ver. 2. Not only for the past, or us present believers, but for the sins of all that shall hereafter believe on him, or come to God through him. The extent and intent of the Mediator's death reaches to all tribes, nations, and countries. As he is the only, so he is the universal atonement and propitiation for all that are saved and brought home to God, and to his favour and forgiveness.

3. And

3. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected hereby know we that we are in him. 6. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

These verses may seem to relate to the seventh verse of the former chapter, between which and these verses, there occurred an incidental discourse concerning the believer's duty and relief in case of sin, occasioned by the mention of one of the believer's privileges, viz. his being cleansed from sin by the Mediator's blood: In that verse the apostle asserts the beneficial consequence of *walking in the light, we have then fellowship with one another*: such divine fellowship and communion as is the prerogative of the church of Christ: Here now succeeds the trial or test of our light and of our love: 1. The trial of our light: *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, ver. 3. Divine light and knowledge is the beauty and improvement of the mind; it becomes the disciples of the Mediator to be persons of wisdom and understanding: Young Christians are apt to magnify their new light, and applaud their own knowledge, especially if it has been suddenly or in a short time communicated; and old ones are apt to suspect the sufficiency and fulness of their knowledge; they lament that they know God and Christ, and the rich contents of his gospel no more: But here is the evidence of the soundness of our knowledge, if it constrains us to *keep God's commands*; each perfection of his nature enforces his authority; the wisdom of his counsels, the riches of his grace, the grandeur of his works, recommend his law and government; a careful conscientious obedience to his commands shews that the apprehension and knowledge of these things is graciously impressed upon the soul; and therefore it must follow in the reverse, that *he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*, ver. 4. Professors of the truth are often ashamed of their ignorance, or ashamed to own it; they frequently pretend to great attainments in the knowledge of divine mysteries: *Thou makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest* (in thy rational judgment) *the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that thou thyself art* (or art fit to be) *a guide to the blind, &c.* Rom. ii. 17, &c. But what knowledge of God can that be that sees not that he is most worthy of the most intire and intense obedience? And if that be seen and known, how vain and superficial is even that knowledge, when it sways not the heart unto obedience? A disobedient life is the confutation and shame of pretended religious knowledge; it gives the lie to such boasts and pretences, and shews that there is neither religion nor honesty in them.

2. The trial of our love: *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him*, ver. 5. To keep the word of God, or of Christ, is sacredly to attend thereto in all the conduct and motion of life; in him that does so is the love of God perfected. Possibly some may here understand *God's love to us*; to be sure his love to us cannot be perfected (or obtain its perfect design and fruit) without our practical observance of his word; we are chosen to be holy and blameless before him in love; we are redeemed to be a peculiar people zealous of good works; we are pardoned and justified, that we may be partakers of larger measures of the divine Spirit for sanctification; we are sanctified, that we may walk in ways of holiness and obedience; no act of divine love, that here terminates upon us obtains its proper tendency, issue and effect, without our holy attendance to God's word; but the phrase rather denotes here our love to God; so ver. 15. *The love of (i. e. to) the Father, is not in him*; so chap. iii. 17. *How dwelleth the love of (i. e. to) God in him?* Now light is to kindle love; and love must and will keep the word of God; it inquires wherein the beloved may be pleased and served, and finding he will be so by any observance of his declared will, there it employs and exerts itself: there love is demonstrated; there it has its perfect (or complete) exercise, operation and delight; and hereby (by this dutiful attendance to the will of God, or Christ) we know that we are in him, ver. 5. we know that we belong to him, and that we are united to him by that Spirit that elevated and assists us to this obedience; and if we acknowledge our relation to him and our union with him, it must have this continued enforcement upon us; *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself to walk as he walked*, ver. 6. The Lord Christ was an inhabitant of this world, and walked here below; here he gave a shining example of absolute obedience to God; they that profess to be on his side, and to abide with him, must walk with him, walk after his pattern and example: The partisans of the several sects of philosophers of old paid great regard to the dictates and practice of their respective teachers and sect-masters, much more the Christian (he that professes to abide in and with Christ) aim to resemble his infallible Master and Head, and conform to his course and prescriptions: *Then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*, John xv. 14.

7. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. 8. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. 9. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

This seventh verse may be supposed either to look backward to what immediately preceded, and then it is *walking as Christ walked* that is here represented, as *no new, but an old commandment*; it is that that the apostles would certainly inculcate wherever they brought Christ's gospel; or to look forward to what the apostle is now going to recommend; and that is the law of fraternal love; this is the message heard from the beginning, chap. iii. 11. and the old commandment, 2 John 5. Now while the apostle addresses himself to the recommendation of such a practice, he is ready to give an instance thereof in his affectionate appellation; *Brethren*, you that are dear to me in the bond of that love to which I would solicit you; and so the precept of fraternal love is recommended.

1. An old one: *I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning*, ver. 7. The precept of love must be as old as human nature, but it might admit divers enactments, inforcements and motives: In the state of innocence, had human nature then been propagated, men must have loved one another, as being of one blood made to dwell on the earth, as being God's offspring, and bearing his image: In the state of sin and promised recovery, they must love one another, as related to God their maker, as related to each other, by blood, and as partners in the same hope. When the Hebrews were peculiarly incorporated, they must accordingly love each other, as being the privileged people, who were the covenants and the adoption, and of whose race the Messiah and head of the church must spring; and the law of love must be conveyed with new obligations to the new Israel of God, to the gospel church, and so it is the old commandment, or the word which the children of the gospel Israel have heard from the beginning, ver. 7.

2. As a new one: *Again, to constrain you to this duty the more a new commandment I write unto you*, the law of the new society, the Christian corporation, which thing is true in him; the matter of which was first true in and concerning the head of it, the truth of it was first and was abundantly in him; he loved the church, and gave himself for it; and in you; this law is, in some measure, written upon your hearts; ye are taught of God to love one another, and that because (or since, or forasmuch as) *the darkness is past, the darkness of your prejudiced unconverted (whether Jewish or Gentile) minds, your deplorable ignorance of God and of his Christ is now past, and the true light now shineth*, ver. 8. the light of evangelical revelation hath shone with life and efficacy into your hearts; hence you have seen the excellency of Christian love, and the fundamental obligation thereto; hence we see the fundamentals (and particularly the fundamental precepts) of the Christian religion may be represented either as new or old; the reformed doctrine, or doctrine of religion in the reformed churches, is new and old; new as taught after long darkness, by the lights of the reformation; new, as purged from the adulterations of Rome; but old, as having been taught and heard from the beginning: We should see that that grace or virtue that was true in Christ, should be true also in us: we should be conformable to our head; the more our darkness is past, and gospel light shines into us, the deeper should our subjection be to the commandments of our Lord, whether considered as old or new.

Light should produce a suitable heat: Accordingly here is another trial of our Christian light; before, it was to be approved by obedience to God; here by Christian love. 1. He that wants such love, in vain pretends his light: *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*, ver. 9. It is proper for sincere Christians to acknowledge what God has done for their souls; but in the visible church there are often those that assume to themselves more than is true; there are those that say they are in the light, the divine revelation has made its impression upon their minds and spirits, and yet they walk in hatred and enmity towards their Christian brethren; these cannot be swayed by the force of the love of Christ to their brethren, and therefore remain in their dark state; notwithstanding their pretended conversion to the Christian religion. 2. He that is managed by such love, approves his light to be good and genuine: *He that loveth his brother (as his brother in Christ) abideth in the light*, ver. 10. He sees the foundation and reason of Christian love; he discerns the weight and value of the Christian redemption; he sees how meet it is that we should love those whom Christ hath loved; and then the consequence will be, that *there is no occasion of stumbling in him*, ver. 10. he will be no scandal, no stumbling block to his brother; he will conscientiously beware that he neither induce his brother to sin, nor turn him out of the way of religion, Christian love teaches us highly to value our brother's soul, and dread every thing that will be injurious to his innocence and peace. 3. Hatred is a sign of spiritual darkness: *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness*, ver. 11. Spiritual light is infused by the Spirit of grace, and one of the first fruits of that Spirit is love; he then that is possessed with malignity towards the Christian brother, must needs be destitute of spiritual light, consequently *he walks in darkness*, ver. 11. his life is agreeable to a dark mind and conscience, and he knows not whither he goes; he sees not whither this dark spirit carries him, and particularly that it will carry him to the world of outer darkness, because *that darkness hath blinded his eyes*, ver. 11. The darkness of unregeneracy, evidenced by a malignant spirit, is contrary to the light of life; where that darkness dwells, the mind, the judgment and the conscience will be darkened, and so will mistake the way to heavenly endless life. Here we may observe how effectually our apostle is now cured of his once hot and flaming spirit: Time was when he was for calling for fire from heaven upon poor ignorant Samaritans that received them not, Luke ix. 5. But his Lord had shewed him that he knew not his own spirit, nor whither it led him: Having now imbibed more of the Spirit of Christ, he breathes out good-will to man, and love to all the brethren: It is the Lord Jesus that is the great Master of love; It is the school (his own church) that is the school of love: His disciples are the disciples of love, and his family must be the family of love.

12. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. 13. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. 12. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. 15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.

This new command of holy love, with the incentives thereto, may possibly be directed to the several ranks of disciples that are here accosted; the several graduates in the Christian university, the catholic church, must be fared to preserve the bond of sacred love; or, there being an important exhortation and dissuasion to follow, without the observance of which, vital religion in the love of God and love of the brethren cannot subsist, the apostle may justly seem to preface it with a solemn address to the several

forms or orders in the school of Christ; let the infants, or minors, the adult, the seniors (or the *adepti*, the *ritari*, the most perfect) in the Christian institution, know that they must *not love this world*: and so,

1. We have the address itself made to the various forms and ranks in the church of Christ; all Christians are not of the same standing and stature; there are babes in Christ, there are grown men, and old disciples; as these have their peculiar states, so they have their peculiar duties; but there is precept and obedience that is common to them all, as particularly mutual love and contempt of the world: We see also that wise pastors will judiciously distribute the word of life, and give to the several members of Christ's family their several suitable portions: *I write unto you children, fathers, and young men*. In this distribution the apostle addresses, 1. To the lowest in the Christian school: *I write unto you, little children*, ver. 12. There are novices in religion, babes in Christ, those that are learning the rudiments of Christian godliness: the apostle may seem to encourage them by applying to them first; and it may be useful to the greater proficients to hear what is said to their juniors, elements are to be repeated; first principles are the foundation of all: He addresses *to the children in Christianity* upon two accounts: (1.) *Because their sins were forgiven them for his name's sake*, ver. 12. The youngest sincere disciple is pardoned; the communion of saints is attended with the forgiveness of sins; sins are forgiven, either for God's name's sake, for the praise of his glory, his glorious perfections displayed in forgiveness; or for *Christ's name's sake*, i. e. upon his score, and upon the account of the redemption that is in him; and they that are forgiven of God, are strongly obliged to relinquish this world which so interferes with the love of God. (2.) *Because of their knowledge of God*: *I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father*, ver. 13. Children in general are wont to know none so soon as their father; children in Christianity must and do know God; *They all know me, from the least to the greatest*, Heb. viii. 11. Children in Christ should know that God is their Father; it is their wisdom: We say, it is a wise child that knows his father; these children cannot but know theirs; they can well be assured by whose power they are regenerate, and by whose grace they are adopted; they that know the Father, may well be withdrawn from the love of this world. Then the apostle proceeds, 2. To those of the highest station and stature; to the seniors in Christianity; to whom he gives an honourable appellation: *I write unto you, fathers*, ver. 13, 14. *To you, Anasians, you old disciples*, Acts xxi. 16. The apostle immediately passes from the bottom to the top of the school, from the lowest form to the highest, that they in the middle may hear both lessons, may remember what they have learned, and perceive what they must come to: *I write unto you, fathers*. They that are of longest standing in Christ's school have need of farther advice and instruction; the oldest disciple must go to heaven, the university above, with his book (his Bible) in his hand; fathers must be wrote unto, preached unto; none too old to learn; he writes to them upon the account of their knowledge: *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning*, ver. 13, 14. Old men have knowledge and experience, and expect deference thereupon: The apostle is ready to own the knowledge of old Christians and to congratulate them thereupon: They know the Lord Christ, particularly *him that was from the beginning*; as chap. i. 1. As Christ is *alpha and omega*, so he must be the beginning and end of our Christian knowledge. *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*, Phil. iii. 8. They that know him that was from the beginning, before this world was made, may well be induced thereby to relinquish this world. Then, 3. To the middle age of Christians; to those that are in their bloom and flower. *I write unto you, young men*, ver. 13, 14. There are the adult in Christ Jesus, those that are arrived to the strength of spirit and sound sense can discern between good and evil. The apostle applies to them upon these accounts: 1. Upon the account of their martial exploits. Dextrous soldiers they are in the camp of Christ; *because ye have overcome the wicked one*, ver. 13. There is a wicked one that is continually warring against souls, and particularly against the disciples: But they that are grown in Christ's school can handle their arms and vanquish the evil one: And they that can vanquish him may be called to vanquish the world too, which is so great an instrument for the devil. 2. Upon the account of their strength, discovered in this their achievement; *because ye are strong, and ye have overcome the wicked one*, ver. 14. Young men are wont to glory in their strength; it will be the glory of youthful persons to be strong in Christ and in his grace; it will be their glory, and it will try their strength to overcome the devil, if they are not too hard for the devil, he will be too hard for them; let vigorous Christians shew their strength in conquering the world; and the same strength must be exerted in overcoming this world, as is employed in overcoming the devil. 3. Because of their acquaintance with the word of God; *and the word of God abideth in you*, ver. 14. The word of God must abide in the adult disciples; it is the nutriment and supply of strength to them; it is the weapon by which they overcome the wicked one; *the sword of the Spirit, whereby they quench his fiery darts*: And they, in whom the word of God dwells, are well furnished for the conquest of the world.

2. We have the dehortation or dissuasion thus prefixed and introduced; a caution fundamental to vital practical religion; *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*, ver. 15. Be crucified to the world, be mortified to the things, to the affairs and enticements of it; the several degrees of Christians should unite in this, in being dead to the world; were they thus united, they would soon unite upon other accounts: The love should be reserved for God; throw it not away upon the world. Now here we see the reasons of this dissuasion and caution, and they are several, and had no need to be so; it is hard to dispute or dissuade disciples themselves from the love of the world; the first is taken from the inconsistency of this love with the love of God: *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, ver. 15. The heart of man is narrow, and cannot contain both loves; the world draws down the heart from God; and so the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God dwindles and decays. The second is taken from the prohibition of worldly love or lust; it is not ordained of God; *it is not of the Father, but is of the world*, ver. 16. this love or lust is not appointed of God, he calls us from it, but it intrudes itself from the world; the world is an usurper of our affection: Now here we have the due consideration and notion of the world, according to which it is to be crucified and renounced: The world, physically considered, is good, and is to be admired as the work of God, and a glass in which his perfections shine; but it is to be considered in its relation to us now in our corrupted state, and as it works upon our weakness, and inflames and inflames our vile affections; there is great affinity and alliance between this world and the flesh, and this world intrudes and inroads upon the flesh, and thereby makes a party against God; the things of the world therefore are distinguished into three classes, according to the three predominant inclinations of depraved nature; as, 1. There is the lust of the flesh; the flesh here being distinguished from the eyes and the life imports the body; the lust of the flesh is, subjectively, the humour and appetite of indulging fleshly pleasures; and objectively, all those things that excite and inflame the pleasures of the flesh; this lust is usually called luxury. 2. There is the lust of

the eyes; the eyes are delighted with treasures; riches and rich possessions are craved by an extravagant eye; this is the lust of covetousness. 3. There is the pride of life; a vain mind craves all the grandeur, equipage, and pomp of a vain-glorious life; this is ambition and thirst after honour and applause; this is, in part, the disease of the ear; it must be flattered with admiration and praise. The objects of these appetites must be abandoned and renounced; as they engage and ingross the affection and desire, they are not of the Father, but of the world, ver. 16. The Father disallows them, and the world should keep them to itself: The lust and appetite to these things must be mortified and subdued; and so the indulging of it is not appointed by the Father, but is insinuated by the ensnaring world. The third is taken from the vain and vanishing state of earthly things and the enjoyment of them: *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof*, ver. 17. The things of the world are fading and dying apace; the lust itself and the pleasure of it withers and decays; desire itself will ere long fail and cease, Eccles. xii. 5. And what is become of all the pomp and pleasure of all those that now lie mouldering in the grave? The fourth from the immortality of the divine lover, the lover of God: *But he that doth the will of God, which must be the character of the lover of God*, in opposition to this lover of the world, *abideth for ever*, ver. 17. the object of his love, in opposition to the world that passeth away, *abideth for ever*; his sacred passion or affection, in opposition to the lust that passeth away, *abideth for ever*; love shall never fail; and he himself is an heir of immortality and endless life, and shall in time be translated thither. From the whole of these verses we should observe the purity and spirituality of the apostolical doctrine; the animal life must be subjected to the divine; the body with its affections should be subjugated to the soul; the soul should be swayed by religion, or the victorious love of God.

18. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Here is, 1. A moral prognostication of the time; the end is coming: *Little children, it is the last time*, ver. 18. Some may suppose that the apostle here addresses to the first rank of Christians again; the juniors are most apt to be seduced; and therefore, *little children*, you that are young in religion, take heed to yourselves that ye be not corrupted: But it may be as elsewhere an universal appellation, introductory of an alarm to all Christians; *Little children, it is the last time*; our Jewish polity in church and state is hastening to an end; the Mosaic institution and discipline is just upon its vanishing away: Daniel's weeks are now expiring: The destruction of the Hebrew city and sanctuary approaching: *The end whereof must be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined*, Dan. ix. 26. It is meet that the disciples should be warned of the hute and end of time, and apprized as much as may be of the prophetic periods of time.

2. The sign of this last time: *Even now there are many antichrists*, ver. 18. many that oppose the person, and doctrine and kingdom of Christ. It is a mysterious portion of Providence that antichrists should be permitted; but when they are come, it is good and safe that the disciples should be informed of them; ministers should be watchmen to the house of Israel: Now it should be no great offence or prejudice to the disciples that there are such antichrists: 1. One great one has been foretold: *As ye have heard that antichrist shall come*, ver. 18. The generality of the church have been informed by divine revelation, that there must be a long and fatal adversary to Christ and his church, 2 Thess. ii. 8, 9, 10. No wonder then there are many harbingers and forerunners of the great one; *even now there are many antichrists*; the mystery of iniquity already worketh. 2. They were foretold also as the sign of this last time: *For there shall arise false christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, inasmuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect*, &c. Matt. xxiv. 24. And these were the forerunners of the dissolution of the Jewish state, nation and religion, whereby we know it is the last time, ver. 18. Let the prediction that we see there has been of seducers arising in the Christian world fortify us against their seduction.

3. Some account of these seducers or antichrists. (1.) More positively; they were once entertainers or professors of apostolical doctrine; *they went out from us*, ver. 19. from our company and communion; possibly from the church of Jerusalem, or some of the churches of Judea, as Acts xv. 1. *Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren*, &c. The purest churches may have their apostates and revolters; the apostolical doctrine did not convert all whom it convinced of its truth. (2.) More privatively; *they were not inwardly such as we are: But they were not of us*; they had not from the heart obeyed the form of sound doctrine delivered to them; they were not of our union with Christ the head: Then here is, 1. The reason upon which it is concluded that they were not of us, were not what they pretended, or what we are, and that is their actual defection: *For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*, ver. 19. had the sacred truth been rooted in their hearts, it would have held them with us; had they had the anointing from above, by which they had been made true and real Christians, they had not turned antichrists: They that apostatize from religion sufficiently indicate that before they were hypocrites in religion: They that have imbibed the spirit of gospel truth have a good preservative against destructive error. 2. The reason why they are permitted thus to depart from apostolical doctrine and communion, that their insincerity may be detected: *But this was done, or they went out, that they may be made manifest that they were not all of us*, ver. 19. The church knows not well who are its vital members and who are not; and therefore the church, considered as internally sanctified, may well be styled invisible: Some of the hypocritical must be manifested here, and that for their own shame and benefit too, in their reduction to the truth, if they have not sinned unto death, and for the terror and caution of others. *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness: But grow in grace*, 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

20. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 21. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth: but because ye know it, and that no lye is of the truth. 22. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? he is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. 23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:

(but

(but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.) 24. Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. 25. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. 26. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie: and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Here, 1. The apostle encourages the disciples (to whom he writes) in these dangerous times, in this hour of seducers; he encourages them in the assurance of their stability in this day of apostacy: *But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things.* We see, 1. The blessing wherewith they were enriched, an unction from heaven; *ye have an unction*: The Christians are anointed ones, their name intimates as much; they are anointed with the oil of grace, with gifts and spiritual endowments by the Spirit of grace; they are anointed into a similitude of their Lord's offices, as subordinate prophets, priests and kings unto God: The holy Spirit is compared unto oil, as well as to fire or water; and the communication of his salvific grace is our anointing. 2. From whom the blessing comes; *from the holy One*: Either from the Holy Ghost or from the Lord Christ, as *Rev. iii. 7.* *These things saith he that is holy; the holy one*: The Lord Christ is glorious in his holiness, the Lord Christ dispenses of the graces of the divine Spirit, and he anoints the disciples to make them like to himself, and to secure them in his interest. 3. The effect of his unction; it is a spiritual eye-salve; it enlightens and strengthens the eyes of the understanding; and thereby *ye know all things*, ver. 20. all these things concerning Christ and his religion it was promised and given you for that end, *John xiv. 26.* The Lord Christ does not deal alike by all his professed disciples: Some are more anointed than others: There is a great danger lest those that are not thus anointed should be so far from being true to Christ, as that they should on the contrary, turn antichrists, and prove adversaries to Christ's person and kingdom and glory.

2. The apostle indicates to them the mind and meaning with which he wrote to them: 1. By way of negation, not as suspecting their knowledge, or supposing their ignorance in the grand truths of the gospel; *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth*, ver. 21. I could not then be so well assured of your stability therein, nor congratulate your inferior position above: It is good to furnish well concerning one's Christian brethren; we ought to do so till evidence overthrow our surmise. A just confidence in religious persons may both encourage and contribute to their holiness. 2. By way of assertion and acknowledgment, as relying upon their judgment in these things: *But because ye know it (ye know the truth in Jesus) and that no lie is of the truth.* They that know the truth in any kind, are thereby prepared to discern what is contrary thereto, and inconsistent therewith: *Rectum est index sui et obliqui*, truth and falsehood do not well mix and suit together: They that are well acquainted with Christian truth, are thereby well fortified against antichristian error and delusion: No lie belongs to religion, either natural or revealed: The apostle most of all condemned lies, and shews the inconsistency of lies with their doctrine: They would be the most self-condemned persons should they propagate the truth by lies: It is a commendation of the Christian religion, that it so well accords with natural religion, which is the foundation of it, that it so well accords with the Jewish religion, which contained the elements or rudiments of it; *No lie is of the truth*: Frauds and impostures then are very unfit means to support and propagate the truth: I suppose it had been better with the state of religion if they had never been used; the result of them appears in the infidelity of our age; the detection of ancient pious frauds and wiles has almost run our age into atheism and irreligion; but the greatest actors and sufferers for the Christian revelation would assure us that *no lie is of the truth*.

3. The apostle further impleads and arraigns these seducers that were newly arisen: 1. They are liars, egregious opposers of sacred truth: *Who is a liar, or the liar, the notorious liar of the time and age in which we live, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* The great and pernicious lies that the father of lies, or of liars, spreads in the world, were of old, and usually are falsehoods and errors relating to the person of Christ: There is no truth so sacred and fully attested, but some or other will contradict or deny it: That *Jesus of Nazareth was the Son and the Christ of God*, had been attested by heaven and earth and hell: It should seem that some, in the tremendous judgment of God, are given up to strong delusions. 2. They are direct enemies to God as well as the Lord Christ: *He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son*, ver. 22. He that opposes Christ denies the witness and testimony of the Father, and the seal that he had given to his Son; *for him hath God the Father sealed*, *John vi. 27.* And he that denies the witness and testimony of the Father concerning Jesus Christ, denies that God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; and consequently abandons the knowledge of God in Christ, and thereupon the whole revelation of God in Christ, and particularly of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; and therefore the apostle may well infer, *Whosoever denies the Son the same hath not the Father*, ver. 23. he hath not the true knowledge of the Father; for the Son hath most and best revealed him; he hath no interest in the Father, in his favour and grace and salvation; *for none cometh to the Father but by the Son*: But, as some copies add, *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*, ver. 23. As there is an intimate relation between the Father and the Son, so there is an inviolable union in the doctrine, knowledge, and interests of them both; so that he that hath the knowledge of and right to the Son, hath the knowledge of and right to the Father also: They that adhere to the Christian revelation hold the light and benefit of natural religion withal.

4. Hereupon the apostle adviseth and persuadeth the disciples to continue in the old doctrine at first communicated to them: *Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning*, ver. 24. Truth is older than error: The truth concerning Christ, that was at first delivered to the saints, is not to be exchanged for novelties: So sure were the apostles of the truth of what they had delivered concerning Christ and from him that after all their toils and sufferings they were not willing to relinquish it: The Christian truth may plead antiquity, and be recommended thereby: This exhortation is enforced by these considerations: 1. From the sacred advantage they will receive by adhering to the primitive truth and faith: (1.) They will continue thereby in holy union with God and Christ: *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you; ye also shall*

continue in the Son and in the Father, ver. 24. It is the truth of Christ abiding in us that is the mean of severing us from sin, and uniting us to the Son of God, *John xv. 9, 4.* It is the Son is the medium or Mediator by whom we are united to the Father: What value then should we put upon gospel truth? (2.) They will thereby secure the promise of eternal life: *And this is the promise that he (even God the Father, chap. v. 11.) hath promised us, even eternal life*, ver. 25. Great is the promise that God makes to his faithful adherents; it is suitable to his own greatness, power, and goodness, it is eternal life, which none but God can give: It is great value that the blessed God puts upon his Son and that truth relating to him, that he is pleased to promise to those that continue in the truth: i. e. (under the light and power and influence of it) *eternal life*. Then the exhortation aforesaid is enforced, 2. From the design of the apostle's writing to them: This letter is to fortify them against the deceivers of the age: *These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce you*, ver. 26. and therefore if you continue not in what you have heard from the beginning my writing and service will be in vain. We should beware lest the apostolical letters, yea, lest the whole scripture of God should be to us insignificant and fruitless. *I have written to him the great things of my law* (and my gospel too) *but they are counted as a strange thing*, *1st. viii. 12.* 3. From the instructive blessing they had received from heaven; *But the anointing which ye have received from him abideth in you*, ver. 27. True Christians have an inward confirmation of the divine truth, they have imbibed; the holy spirit has imprinted it on their minds and hearts: It is meet the Lord Jesus should have a constant witness, in the hearts of his disciples: The unction, the pouring out of the gifts of grace upon sincere disciples, is a seal to the truth and doctrine of Christ; since none giveth that seal but God: *Now he who stablisheth us with you (and you with us) in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.* 2 Cor. i. 21. This sacred christ or divine unction is commended on these accounts: 1. it is durable and lasting; oil or unguent is not so soon dried up as water; it *abideth in you*, ver. 27. Divine illumination in order to confirmation, must be something continued or constant; temptations, snares and seductions arise, *the anointing must abide*. It is better than human instruction: *And ye need not that any man teach you*, ver. 27. Not that this anointing will teach you without the appointed ministry; it could if God so pleased but it will not; but will teach you better than we can; *and ye need not that any man teach you*, ver. 27. Ye were instructed by us before ye were anointed; but now our teaching is nothing in comparison to that: *Who teacheth like him?* Job xxxvi. 22. The divine unction does not supersede ministerial teaching, but surmounts it. 3. It is a sure evidence of truth, and all that it teacheth is infallible truth. *But as the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth and is no lie*, ver. 27. The holy spirit must needs be the Spirit of truth as he is called *John xiv. 26.* The instruction and illumination that he affords must needs be in and of the truth: *The Spirit of truth will not lie.* And he teacheth all things, i. e. all things in the present dispensation, all things necessary to our knowledge of God in Christ, and their glory in the gospel: And, 4. It is of a conservative influence; it will preserve those in whom it abides, against seducers and their seduction: *And even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*, ver. 27. It teaches you to abide in Christ; and as it teaches you, it secures you; it lays a restraint upon your minds and hearts, that you may not revolt from him. *And hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us for himself, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

28. And now little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. 29. If ye know that he is righteous, and ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him,

From the blessing of the sacred unction, the apostle proceeds in his advice and exhortation to constancy in and with Christ. *And now little children abide in him*, ver. 28. The apostle repeats his kind appellation, *little children*: Which I suppose does not so much denote the diminutiveness of them as the affection of him, and therefore I judge may be rendered *dear children*: He would persuade by love and prevail by endearment as well as by reason. Not only the love of Christ but the love of you constrains us to inculcate your perseverance, and that *you would abide in him*, in the truth relating to his person, and in your union with him and allegiance to him. Evangelical privileges are obligatory to evangelical duties. And they that are anointed by the Lord Jesus, are highly obliged to abide with him in opposition to all adversaries whatever. And this duty of perseverance and constancy in trying times, is strongly urged by two following considerations. 1. From the consideration of his return at the great day of account. *That when he shall appear they may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*, ver. 28. It is here taken for granted that the Lord Jesus will come again. This was part of that truth they had heard from the beginning. And when he comes again he will publicly appear; be manifested to all. When he was here before, he came privately (in comparison.) He proceeded from a womb, and was introduced into a stable. But when he comes again, he will come from the opened heavens, and every eye shall see him: And then they that have continued with him throughout all their temptations shall have confidence, assurance and joy in the sight of him. They shall lift up their heads with unspeakable triumph, as knowing that their complete redemption comes along with him. On the contrary they that have deserted him shall be ashamed before him; they shall be ashamed of themselves, ashamed of their unbelief, their cowardice, ingratitude, temerity and folly, in forsaking so glorious a redeemer. They shall be ashamed of their hopes, expectations and pretences, and ashamed of all the wages of unrighteousness, by which they were induced to desert him. *That we may have confidence and we may not be ashamed.* The apostle includes himself in the number. Let not us be ashamed of you, as well as you will not be ashamed of yourselves. Or, *μη ἀισχυθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτῶν*, that we be not ashamed, (i. e.) made ashamed, or put to shame, by him at his coming. At his public appearance, he will shame all those that have abandoned him, he will disclaim all acquaintance with them, will cover them with shame and confusion, will abandon them to darkness, devils, and endless despair, by professing before men and angels, that he is ashamed of them, *Mark viii. 38.* Now to the same advice and exhortation he proceeds,

2. From the consideration of the dignity of those, that still adhere to Christ and his religion. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him*, ver. 29. The particle *that* rendered it, seems not to be *ex dubitantis*, but *concedentis*; not so much a conditional particle, as a suppositional one (if I may call it so,) a note of allowance or concession; and so seems to be of the same import with our English *inasmuch or whereas*, or *since*. So the sense runs more clear. *Since ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.* He that doth righteousness may here be justly enough informed as another name

for him that abideth in Christ. For he that abideth in Christ, abideth in the law and love of Christ; and consequently in his alliance and obedience to him: and so must do or work or practise righteousness, or the parts of gospel holiness. Now such a one must be born of him. He is renewed by the spirit of Christ, after the image of Christ. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath fore ordained that they should walk in them*, Eph. ii. 10. Since then you know that the Lord Christ is righteous, (righteous in his quality and capacity; the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our sanctifier or our sanctification; as 1 Cor. i. 30.) ye cannot but know thereupon, or know ye, it is for your consideration and regard, that he that by the continued practice of Christianity abideth in him, is born of him. The new spiritual nature is derived from the Lord Christ. He that is constant to the practice of religion in trying times, gives good evidence that he is born from above, from the Lord Christ. The Lord Christ is an everlasting Father. It is a great privilege and dignity to be born of him. They that are so are the children of God. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*, John ii. 11. And this introduces the context of the following chapter.

C H A P. III.

The apostle here magnifies the love of God in our adoption, ver. 1, 2. He thereupon argues for holiness, ver. 3. and against sin, ver. 4—10. He presseth brotherly love, ver. 11, 12—18. How to assure our hearts before God, ver. 19—22. The precept of faith, ver. 23. And the good of obedience, ver. 24.

1. BEHOLD what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

The apostle having shewn the dignity of Christ's faithful followers, that they are born of him, and thereby nearly allied to God, now here, 1. Breaks forth into the admiration of that grace that is the spring of such a wonderful vouchsafement. Behold (see ye, observe) what manner of love, or how great love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, effectually called; he that calls things that are not, makes them to be what they were not, the sons of God! The Father adopts all the children of the Son. The Son indeed calls them, and makes them his brethren; and thereby he confers upon them the power and dignity of the sons of God. It is wonderful condescending love of the eternal Father, that such as we should be made and called his sons; we that by nature are heirs of sin and guilt, and the curse of God! we, that by practice are children of corruption, disobedience, and ingratitude! Strange that the holy God is not ashamed to be called our Father, and to call us his sons! Thence the apostle, 2. Infers the honour of believers above the cognizance of the world: Unbelievers know little of them. Therefore, or wherefore upon this score, the world knoweth us not, ver. 1. Little does the world perceive the advancement and happiness of the genuine followers of Christ. They are here exposed to the common calamities of earth and time; all things fall alike to them as to others, unless they are subject to the greater sorrow: For they have often reasons to say, *if in this life only we had hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable*, 1 Cor. xv. 19. The unchristian world therefore that walks by sight, knows not their dignity, their privileges, the enjoyments they have in hand, or what they are intitled to. Little does the world think that these poor, humble, contemned ones are the favourites of heaven and will be inhabitants there ere long. And they may bear their case the better, since their Lord was here unknown as well as they. *Because it knew him not*, ver. 1. Little did the world think how great a person was once sojourning here; that the maker of it was once an inhabitant of it. Little did the Jewish world think that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was one of their blood, and dwelt in their land; he came to his own and his own received him not. He came to his own, and his own crucified him; but surely had they known him they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 2 Cor. ii. 8. Let the followers of Christ be content with hard fare here, since they are in a land of strangers, among those that little know them, and their Lord was so treated before them. Then the apostle, 3. Exalts these persevering disciples in the prospect of the certain revelation of their state and dignity. Where, 1. Their present honourable relation is asserted. Beloved, ye may well be our beloved, for ye are beloved of God, now are we the sons of God, ver. 2. We have the nature of sons by regeneration: We have the title and spirit and right to the inheritance of sons by adoption. *This honour have all the saints*. 2. The discovery of the bliss belonging and suitable to this relation is defined. *And it doth not yet appear what we shall be*, ver. 2. The glory pertaining to the sonship and adoption is adjourned and reserved for another world. The discovery of it here would put a stop to the current of affairs that must now proceed. The sons of God must walk by faith, and live by hope. 3. The time of the revelation of the sons of God in their proper state and glory is determined; and that is when their elder brother comes to call and collect them all together. *But we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him*. That the particle usually translated *if*, is here well rendered when, may appear not only because the Hebrew particle *ox* (to which this is thought to correspond) is observed so to signify, as Dr. Whitby has here noted; and only is *ox* sometimes used for *oxar*, but some copies even here read *oxar*, when. And accordingly it seems proper so to render it in John xiv. 3. where we read it, *And if I go and prepare a place; but more naturally and properly, When I shall have gone and shall have prepared the place, I will come again and receive you unto myself*; or *καταλίσσει, I will take you along with myself, that where I am there ye may be also*. When the head of the church, the only begotten of the Father, shall appear, his members the adopted of God, shall appear and be manifested together with him. They may then well wait in faith, hope, and earnest desire, for the revelation of the Lord Jesus; as even the creation itself waiteth for the perfection, and the public manifestation of the sons of God, Rom. viii. 19. The sons of God will be known, and be made manifest by their likeness to their head; *they shall be like him*, like him in honour and power and glory. Their vile bodies shall be made like his glorious body: they shall be filled with life, light, and bliss from him; *when he who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory*, Col. iii. 4. Then, 4. Their likeness to him is argued from the sight they shall have of him; *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*. Either

their likeness will be the cause of that sight they shall have of him. Indeed, all shall see him, but not as they do; not as he is, viz. to those in heaven. They shall see him in his crown, in the terror of his majesty and splendour of his avenging perfections: But these shall see him in the smiles and beauty of his face; in the correspondence and amiableness of his glory; in the harmony and agreeableness of his beatific perfections. Their likeness shall enable them to see him as the blessed do in heaven. Or the sight of him shall be the cause of their likeness; it shall be a transformative sight; they shall be transformed into the same image by the beatific view that they shall have of him. Then the apostle, 4. Urges the engagement of these sons of God to the prosecution of holiness; *and every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure*, ver. 3. The sons of God know that their Lord is holy and pure; he is of purer heart and eyes than to admit any pollution or impurity to dwell with him. They then that hope to live with him must study the utmost purity from the world and flesh and sin; they must grow in grace and holiness. Not only does their Lord command them to do so, but their new nature inclines them so to do; yea, their hope of heaven will dictate and constrain them so to do. They know their high priest is holy, harmless, and undefiled. They know that their God and Father is the high and only One; that all the society is pure and holy; that their inheritance is an inheritance of saints in light. It is a contradiction to such hope to indulge sin and impurity. And therefore as we are sanctified by faith, we must be sanctified by hope. That we may be saved by hope, we must be purified by hope. It is the hope of hypocrites, and not as the sons of God, that makes an allowance for the gratification of impure desires and lusts.

4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law. 5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7. Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: 8. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God neither he that loveth not his brother.

The apostle having alleged the believer's obligation to purity, from his hope of heaven, and of communion with Christ in glory at the day of his appearance, now proceeds to fill his own mouth and the believer's mind with multiplied arguments against sin, and all communion with the impure unfruitful works of darkness. And so he reasons and argues,

1. From the nature of sin and the intrinsic evil of it. It is a contrariety to the divine law. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also* (or even) the law (or whosoever committed sin even committeth enormity or aberration from law or from the law.) *For sin is the transgression of the law*, (or is lawlessness) ver. 4. Sin is the desertion or privation, of correspondence and agreement with the divine law; that law that is the transcript of the divine nature and purity: that contains his will for the government of the world; that is suitable to the rational nature, and enacted for the good of the world; that shews man the way of felicity and peace, and conducts him to the author of his nature and of the law. The current commission of sin now is the rejection of the divine law, and that is the rejection of the divine authority, and consequently of God himself.

2. From the design and errand of the Lord Jesus in and to this world, which was to remove sin; and ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin, ver. 5. The Son of God appeared and was known in our nature; and he came to vindicate and exalt the divine law, and that by obedience to the precept and by subjection, and suffering under the penal sanction under the curse of it. *He came therefore to take away our sins*; to take away the guilt of them by the sacrifice of himself; to take away the commission of them by implanting a new nature in us: For we are sanctified by virtue of his death to dissuade and save from it by his own example. *And (or for) in him was no sin*, or he takes sin away that he might conform us to himself; and in him is no sin. They that expect communion with Christ above should study communion with him here in utmost purity. And the Christian world should know and consider the great end of the Son of God's coming hither; *it was to take away sin; and ye know* (and this knowledge shall be deep and effectual) *that he was manifested to take away our sins*.

3. From the opposition between sin and a real union with or adhesion unto the Lord Christ, *whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*, ver. 6. To sin here is the same as to commit sin, ver. 8, 9. and to commit sin is to practise sin. He that abideth in Christ continues not in the practice of sin. As vital union with the Lord Jesus broke the power of sin in the heart and nature; so continuance therein prevents the regency and prevalence thereof in the life and conduct; or the negative expression is here put for the positive. *He sinneth not*, that is, he is obedient, he keeps the commandments (in sincerity and in the ordinary course of life) and does those things that are pleasing in his sight, as is said, ver. 22. They that abide in Christ abide in their covenant with him, and consequently watch against the sin that is contrary thereto. They abide in the potent light and knowledge of him; and therefore it may be concluded, that he that sinneth (abideth in the predominant practice of sin) hath not seen him (hath not his mind impressed with a sound evangelical discerning of him) neither known him, hath no experimental acquaintance with him. Practical renunciation of sin is the great evidence of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ.

4. From the connection between the practice of righteousness and a state of righteousness; intimating withal, that the practice of sin and a justified state are inconsistent; and this is introduced with a supposition that a surmise to the contrary is a gross deceit. *Little children, dear children! and as much children as ye are, herein, let no man deceive you*. There will be those that will magnify your new light and entertainment of Christianity; that will make you believe that your knowledge, profession, and baptism, will excuse you from the care and accuracy of the Christian life. But beware of such self-deceit. *He that doth righteousness is righteous*. It may appear that righteousness may in several places of scripture be justly rendered religion,

as Matt. v. 10. *Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, i. e. for religion sake.* And 1 Pet. iii. 14. *But if ye suffer for righteousness sake (i. e. religion sake) happy are ye.* And so 2 Tim. iii. 16. *All scripture, or the whole scripture, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, and for instruction in righteousness, i. e. in the nature and branches of religion.* To do righteousness then, especially being set in opposition to the doing, committing, or practising of sin, is to practise religion. Now he that practiseth religion is righteous; he is the righteous person on all accounts; he is sincere and upright before God. The practice of religion cannot subsist without a principle of integrity and conscience. He that has righteousness that consists in pardon of sin and right to life, founded upon the imputation of the Mediator's righteousness. He has a title to the crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge will give, according to his covenant and promise, to those that love his appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8. He has communion with Christ in conformity to the divine law, being in some measure practically righteous as he; and has communion with him in the justified state, being now relatively righteous together with him.

5. From the relation between the sinner and the devil; and thereupon from the design and office of the Lord Christ towards the devil: 1. From the relation between the sinner and the devil. As elsewhere sinners and saints are famously distinguished; though even saints are sinners largely so called; so to commit sin is here to practise it, as sinners do that are distinguished from saints; to live under the power and dominion of it. And he that does so is of the devil: his sinful nature is inspired by, agreeable and pleasing to the devil; and he belongs to the party and interest and kingdom of the devil. It is he that is the author and patron of sin, and has been a practitioner of it, a tempter and instigator to it, even from the beginning of the world. And thereupon we must see how he argues. 2. From the design and office of the Lord Jesus Christ against the devil. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, ver. 8. The devil has designed and endeavoured to ruin the work of God in this world. The Son of God hath undertaken the holy war against him. He came into our world; and was manifested in our flesh, that he might conquer him and dissolve his works. Sin will he loosen and dissolve more and more, till he has quite destroyed it. Let not us serve or indulge what the Son of God came to destroy.

6. From the connection between regeneration and the relinquishment of sin; *whoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.* To be born of God is to be inwardly renewed and restored to an holy integrity or rectitude of nature by the power of the Spirit of God. Such a one committeth not sin, does not work iniquity and practise disobedience, that is contrary to his new nature and the regenerate complexion of his Spirit. For, as the apostle adds, *his seed remaineth in him*, either the word of God in his light and power remaineth in him, as 1 Pet. i. 23. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever.* Or, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; the spiritual seminal principle of holiness remaineth in him. Renewing grace is an abiding principle. Religion, in the spring of it, is not an art, an acquired dexterity and skill, but a new nature. And thereupon the consequence is, the regenerate person cannot sin; that he cannot commit an act of sin, I suppose no judicious interpreter understands. That would be contrary to chap. i. 9. where it is made our duty to confess our sins, and supposed our privilege thereupon to have our sins forgiven. He therefore cannot sin, in the sense the apostle says, *he cannot sin.* He cannot continue in the course and practice of sin. He cannot do sin, as to denominate him a sinner in opposition to a saint or servant of God. Again, he cannot sin comparatively as he did before he was born of God, and as others do that are not so. And the reason is, *because he is born of God.* Which will amount to all this inhibition and impediment. 1. There is that light in his mind that shews him the evil and malignity of sin. 2. There is that bias upon his heart, that disposes him to loathe and hate sin. 3. There is the spiritual seminal principle or disposition, that breaks the force and fulness of the sinful acts. They proceed not from that plenary power of corruption as they do in others, nor obtain that plenitude of heart, spirit, and consent, as they do in others. The spirit lusteth against the flesh. And therefore in respect to such sin it may be said, *it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* It is not reckoned the person's sin in the gospel account, where the bent and frame of the mind and spirit is against it. Then, 4. There is a disposition for humiliation and repentance for sin when it has been committed. *He that is born of God, cannot sin.* Here we may call to mind the usual distinction of natural and moral impotency. The unregenerate person is morally unable for what is religiously good. The regenerate person is (happily) disabled for sin. There is a restraint, an embargo (as we may say) laid upon his sinning powers. It goes against him sedately and deliberately to sin. We usually say of a person of known integrity, he cannot lye, he cannot cheat and commit other enormities. *How can I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. And so they that persist in a sinful life sufficiently demonstrate that they are not born of God.

From the discrimination between the children of God and the children of the devil. They have their distinct characters. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil*, ver. 10. In the world (according to the old distinction) there is the seed of God, and the seed of the serpent. Now the seed of the serpent is known by these two signatures. 1. By neglect of religion; *whoever doth not righteousness* (omits and disregards the rights and dues of God; for religion is but our righteousness towards God, or giving him his due; and whoever does not conscientiously do this) *is not of God*; but on the contrary of the devil. The devil is the father of unrighteous or irreligious souls. And, 2. By hatred of fellow-Christians. *Neither he that loveth not his brother*, ver. 10. True Christians are to be loved for God's and Christ's sake. They that so love them not (but despise, and hate, and persecute them) have the serpentine nature still abiding in them.

11. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12. Not as Cain who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother: and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

The apostle having intimated that one note of the devil's children is hatred of the brethren, takes occasion thence, 1. To recommend fraternal Christian love, and that from the excellence, or antiquity, or primariness of the injunction relating thereto. And this is the message (the errand or charge) which ye heard from the beginning (this came among the principal parts of practical Christianity) that we should love one another, ver. 11. We should love the Lord Jesus, and value his love, and consequently love all the objects of it, and thereupon all our brethren in Christ.

2. To dissuade from what is contrary thereto, all ill will towards the

brethren, and that by the example of Cain. His envy and malignity should deter us from harbouring the like passion, and that upon these accounts. 1. It shewed that he was as the first-born of the serpent's seed, even he, the eldest son of the first man was of the wicked one. He imitated and resembled the first wicked one, the devil. 2. His ill-will had no restraint; it proceeded so far as to contrive and accomplish murder, and that of a near relation, and that in the beginning of the world, when there were but few to replenish it. *He slew his brother*, ver. 12. Sin indulged knows no bound. And, 3. It proceeded so far, and had so much of the devil, that he murdered his brother for religion's sake. He stomached the inferiority of Abel's service, and envied him the favour and acceptance he had with God. And for these martyred his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous, ver. 12. Ill-will will teach us to hate and revenge what we should admire and imitate. And then,

3. To infer, that it is no wonder then that good men are so served now. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you*, ver. 13. The serpentine nature still continues in the world. The great serpent himself reigns as the God of this world. Wonder not then that the serpentine world hates and hisses at you that belong to that seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent's head.

14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

The beloved apostle can scarce touch upon the mention of sacred love, but he must enlarge upon the enforcement of it; as here he does by divers arguments and incentives thereto; as,

1. That it is a note of our evangelical justification, of our transition into a state of life. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*, ver. 14. We are by nature children of wrath and heirs of death. By the gospel (the gospel covenant or promise) our state towards another world is altered and changed. We pass from death to life; from the guilt of death to the right of life. And this transition is made upon our believing in the Lord Jesus. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*, and he that believeth not, *hath the wrath of God abiding on him*. John iii. 36. Now this happy change of state we may come to be assured of; we know that we are passed from death to life; and we may know it by the evidences of our faith in Christ, of which this love to our brethren is one, which leads us to characterize this love, that is such a mark of our justified state. It is not a zeal for a party in the common religion, nor an affection for, or an affection of those that are of the same denomination and subordinate sentiments with ourselves. But this love, 1. Supposes a general love to mankind; the law of Christian love, in the Christian community, is founded on the Catholic law, in the society of mankind, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Mankind is to be loved principally on these two accounts. 1. As the excellent work of God, and, 2. As being beloved in Christ. 1. As the excellent work of God, made by him and made in wonderful resemblance of him. The reasons that God assigns for the certain punishment of a murderer, is a reason against our hatred of any of the brethren of mankind; and consequently a reason for our love to them; *for in the image of God made he man*, Gen. ix. 6. 2. As being, in some measure beloved in Christ. The whole race of mankind, the *gens humana*, should be considered, as being, in distinction from fallen angels, a redeemed nation, as having a divine redeemer designed, prepared and given for them. *So God loved the world*, even this world, *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. A world so beloved of God should accordingly be loved by us. And this love will exert itself in earnest desires, and prayers, and attempts for the conversion and salvation of the yet uncalled blinded world; *my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved*. And then this love will include all due love to enemies themselves. Then this Christian love, 2. Includes a peculiar love to the Christian society, to the catholic church and that for the sake of her head, as being his body; as being redeemed, justified, and sanctified in and by him; and this love particularly acts and operates towards those of the catholic church, that we have opportunity of being personally acquainted with or credibly informed of. And so they are not so much loved for their own sakes, as for the sake of God and Christ, that have loved them. And it is God and Christ, or if you will, the love of God and grace of Christ, that is beloved and valued in them and towards them. And so this is the issue of faith in Christ; and is thereupon a note of our passage from death to life.

2. The hatred of our brethren is, on the contrary, a sign of our deadly state, of our continuance under the legal sentence of death; *he that loveth not his brother* (his brother in Christ) *abideth in death*, ver. 14. He yet stands under the curse and condemnation of the law. This the apostle argues by a clear syllogism. Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; but he that hates his brother is a murderer; and therefore ye cannot but know, that he that hates his brother hath not eternal life abiding in him, ver. 15. *or he abideth in death*, as it is expressed, ver. 14. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*. For hatred of the person is, so far as it prevails, an hatred of life and welfare, and naturally tends to desire the extinction of it. Cain hated and then slew his brother. And then hatred will shut up the bowels of compassion from the poor brethren, and will thereby expose them to the sorrows of death. And it has appeared that hatred of the brethren has in all ages dressed them up in ill names, odious characters and calumnies, and exposed them, to persecution and the sword. No wonder then, that he that pretty well knows the heart of man, or is taught by him that fully knows it, that knows the natural tendency and issue of vile and violent passions, and knows withal the fulness of the divine law declares him that hates his brother to be a murderer. Now he that by the frame and disposition of his heart is a murderer, cannot have eternal life abiding in him. For he that is such, must needs be carnally minded; and to be carnally minded is death, Rom. viii. 6. The apostle by the expression of having eternal life abiding in us, may seem to mean the possession of an internal principle of endless life. According to that of the Saviour; *whoever*

ever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: Shall never be totally destitute thereof, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14. And thereupon some may be apt to surmise, that the passing from death to life, ver. 14. does not signify the relative change made in our justification of life, but the real change made in the regeneration to life. And accordingly, that the abiding in death, mentioned ver. 14. in continuance in spiritual death, as it is usually called, or abiding in the corrupt deadly temper of nature, but as these passages more naturally denote the state of the person, whether adjudged to life and death; so the relative transition from death to life may well be proved or disproved by the possession or non-possession of the inward principle of eternal life. Since washing from the guilt of sin, and from the filth and power of sin, are inseparably united. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

3. The example of God and Christ should inflame our hearts with this holy love; hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, ver. 16. The great God hath given his Son to the death for us. But since this apostle hath declared that the word was God, and that he became flesh for us; I see not why we may not interpret this of God the Word. Here is the love of God himself, of him who in his own person is God, though not the Father, that he assumed a life, that he might lay it down for us! Here is the condescension, the miracle, the mystery of divine love, that God would redeem the church with his own blood! And surely we should love those whom God hath loved and so loved! And shall certainly do so, if we have any love for God.

The apostle having proposed this flaming, and constraining example of and motive to love, proceeds to shew us what should be the temper and effect of this our Christian love. And, so, 1. It must be in the highest degree so fervent, as to make us willing to suffer even to death for the good of the church, for the safety and salvation of the dear brethren. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, ver. 16. either in our ministrations and services to them: yea, and if I be offered upon the service and sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; (I shall congratulate your felicity). Phil. ii. 17. Or in exposing ourselves to hazards (when called thereto) for the safety and preservation of those that are more serviceable to the glory of God and the edification of the church, than we can be: Who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles, Rom. xvi. 4. How mortified should the Christian be to this life? How prepared to part with it? And how well assured of a better?

2. It must be in the next degree compassionate, liberal, and communicative to the necessities of the brethren. For, who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ver. 17. It pleases God that some of the Christian brethren should be poor, for the exercise of the charity and love of those that are rich. And it pleases the same God to give to some of the Christian brethren this world's good, that they may exercise their grace in communicating to the poor saints. And they that have this world's good, must love a good God more, and their good brethren more, and be ready to distribute it for their sakes. It appears here that this love to the brethren is founded upon love to God, in that it is here called so by the apostle. How dwelleth the love of God in him? This love to the brethren is love to God in them; and where there is none of this love to them there is no true love to God to all. I was going to intimate the third and lowest degree in the next verse, but the apostle has prevented me, by intimating that this last charitable communicative love in persons of ability, is the lowest that can consist with the love of God. But there may be other fruits of this love; and therefore the apostle desires that in all it should be unfeigned and operative, as circumstances will allow. My little children (my dear children in Christ) let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth, ver. 18. Compliments and flatteries become not Christians; but the sincere expressions of sacred affection, and the services or labours of love do. This,

4. This love will evince our sincerity in religion, and give us hope towards God; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, ver. 19. It is a great happiness to be assured of our integrity in religion. They that are so assured, may have holy boldness or confidence towards God; they may appeal to him from the censures and condemnation of the world. The way to arrive at the knowledge of our own truth and uprightness in Christianity, and to secure our inward peace, is to abound in love, and in the works of love towards the Christian brethren.

20. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. 22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

The apostle having intimated that there may be, even among us such a privilege as an assurance or sound persuasion of heart towards God, proceeds here,

1. To establish the court of conscience, and to assert the authority of it; For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, ver. 20. Our heart here is our self-reflecting, judicial power, that noble, excellent ability, whereby we can take cognizance of ourselves, of our spirits, our dispositions and actions; and accordingly pass a judgment upon our state towards God; and so it is the same with conscience, or the power of moral self-consciousness; this power can act both as witness, judge, and executioner of judgment; it either accuses, or excuses, condemns or justifies; it is set and placed in this office by God himself; the spirit of man, thus capacitated and empowered, is the candle of the Lord, a luminary lighted and set up by the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly, taking into scrutiny, and viewing the penetralia, the private recesses, and secret transactions of the inner man, Prov. xx. 27. Conscience is God's viceroy, calls the court in his name, and acts for him; the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1 Pet. iii. 21. God is chief judge of the court; if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, i. e. superior to our heart and conscience in power and judgment: hence the act and judgment of the court is the act and judgment of God: as, 1. If conscience condemn us, God does so too; For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, ver. 20. God is a greater witness than our conscience, and knoweth more against us than it does; he knoweth all things: He is a greater judge than conscience, for as he is supreme, so his judgment shall stand, and shall be fully and finally executed: And this seems to be the design of another apostle, when he says, For I know nothing

by myself, i. e. in the case wherein I am censured by some; I am not conscious of any guile, or allowed unfaithfulness, in my stewardship and ministry. yet am I not hereby justified; it is not by my own conscience that I must ultimately stand or fall; the justification, or justifying sentence of my conscience, or self-consciousness, will not determine the controversy between you and me: as you do not appeal to its sentence, so neither will you be conoluded by its decision; but he that judgeth me, supremely and finally judgeth me, and by whose judgment you and I must be determined, is the Lord, 1 Cor. iv. 4. Or, 2. If conscience acquit us, God does so too: Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, ver. 21. then have we assurance that he accepts us now, and will acquit us in the great day of account: But possibly may some presumptuous soul here say, I am glad of this; my heart does not condemn me, and therefore I may conclude God does not: As, on the contrary, upon the foregoing verse, some pious trembling soul will be ready to cry out, God forbid! my heart or conscience condemns me, and must I then infallibly expect the condemnation of God? But let such know, that the errors of the witness are not here reckoned as the acts of the court; ignorance, error, prejudice, partiality; and presumption, may be said to be faults of the officers of the court, or of the attendants of the judge, as the mind, the will, appetite, passion, sensual disposition or disordered brain; or of the jury, that gives a false verdict, not of the judge itself; conscience, *evidens*, is properly self-consciousness; acts of ignorance and error are not acts of self-consciousness, but of some mistaken power; and the court of conscience is here described in its process, according to the original constitution of it by God himself; according to which process, what is bound in conscience is bound in heaven; let conscience therefore be heard, be well informed, and diligently attended unto.

2. To indicate the privilege of those that have a good conscience towards God; they have interest in heaven and in the court above; their suits are heard there: And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, ver. 22. It is supposed that the petitioners do not desire, or do not intend to desire any thing that is contrary to the honour and glory of the court, or to their own intended spiritual good; and then they may depend upon receiving the good things they ask for; and this supposition may well be made concerning the petitioners, or they may well be supposed to receive the good things they ask for, considering their qualification and practice; because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight, ver. 23. Obedient souls are prepared for blessings, and they have promise of audience; they that commit things displeasing to God, cannot expect that he should please them in hearing and answering their prayers, Psalm lxxvi. 18. Prov. xxviii. 9.

23. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

The apostle having mentioned keeping the commandments, and pleasing of God, as the qualification of effectual petitioners in and with heaven, here suitably proceeds. 1. To represent to us what those commandments primarily and summarily are; they are comprehended in this double one: And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, ver. 23. To believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, is, 1. To discern what he is according to his name; to have an intellectual view of his person and office, as the Son of God, and the anointed Saviour of the world; that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, John vi. 40. 2. To approve him in judgment and conscience, i. e. in conviction and consciousness of our case, as one wisely and wonderfully prepared and adapted for the whole work of the eternal salvation. 3. To consent to, and acquiesce in him as our redeemer and recoverer unto God. 4. To trust to, and rely upon him for the full and final discharge of his saving office: They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee, Psalm ix. 10. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day, 2 Tim. i. 12. This faith is a needful requisite to those that would be prevalent petitioners with God; because it is by the Son that we must come to the Father; through his grace and righteousness our persons must be accepted or ingratulated with the Father, Eph. i. 6. through his purchase all our desired blessings must come; and through his intercession our prayers must be heard and answered: This is the first part of the commandment that must be observed by acceptable worshippers, the second is, that we love one another, as he gave us commandment, ver. 23. The command of Christ should be continually before our eyes: Christian love must possess our souls when we go to God in prayer: To this end we must remember, that our Lord obliges us, 1. To forgive those that offend us, Matt. vi. 14. and, 2. To reconcile ourselves to those that we have offended, Matt. v. 23, 24. As good-will to men was proclaimed from heaven, so good-will to men, and particularly to the brethren, must be carried in the hearts of those that go to God and heaven.

2. To represent to us the blessedness and obedience to these commands: the obedient enjoy communion with God; and he that keepeth his commandments, and particularly these of faith and love, dwelleth in him, and he in him, ver. 24. We dwell in God by a happy relation to him, and spiritual union with him, through his Son, and by an holy converse with him; and God dwells in us by his word, and our faith fixed on him, and by the operations of his Spirit; and then there occurs the trial of this divine inhabitation; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us, ver. 24. by that sacred disposition and frame of soul that he hath conferred upon us; which being a spirit of faith in God and Christ, and of love to God and man, appears to be of God.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter the apostle exhorts to try spirits, ver. 3. Gives a note to try by, ver. 2, 3. Shews who are of the world, and who of God, ver. 4, 5, 6. Urges Christian love by divers considerations, ver. 7—10. Describes our love to God, and the effect of it, ver. 17—21.

1. **B**ELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. 3. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come

come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.

The apostle having said that God's dwelling in and with us may be known by the Spirit that he hath given us, intimates, that that Spirit may be discerned and distinguished from other spirits that appear in the world; and so here, 1. He calls the disciples, to whom he writes, to caution and scrutiny about the spirits, and spiritual professors that were now risen. 1. To caution: *Beloved, believe not every spirit*; regard not, trust not, follow not every pretender to the Spirit of God, or every professor of vision, or inspiration, or revelation from God; truth is the foundation of simulation and counterfeits; there had been real communications from the divine Spirit, and therefore others pretended thereto. God will take away of his own wisdom and goodness, though it may be liable to abuse; he has sent inspired teachers to the world, and given us a supernatural revelation, though others may be so evil, and so impudent as to pretend the same; every pretender to the divine Spirit, or to inspiration, and extraordinary illumination thereby, is not to be believed. Time was when the spiritual man (the man of the Spirit that made a great noise about, and boast of the Spirit) was mad, Hos. ix. 7. 2. To scrutiny: To examination of the claims that are laid to the Spirit: *But try the spirits whether they are of God*, ver. 1. God has given of his Spirit in these latter ages of the world, but not to all that profess to come furnished therewith: to the disciples is allowed a judgment of discretion, in reference to the spirits that would be believed and trusted in the affairs of religion; a reason is given for this trial, *because many false prophets have gone out into the world*, ver. 1. there being much about the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world a general expectation among the Jews of a Redeemer to Israel, and the humiliation, spiritual reformation, and sufferings of the Saviour being taken as a prejudice against him, others were induced to set up as prophets and messiahs to Israel, according to the Saviour's prediction, *Matt. xxiv. 23, 24*. It should not seem strange to us that false teachers set themselves up in the church, it was so in the apostles times; fatal is the spirit of delusion, sad that men should vaunt themselves for prophets, and inspired preachers, that are by no means so!

2. He gives a test whereby the disciples may try these pretending spirits; these spirits set up for prophets, doctors, or dictators in religion, and so they are to be tried by their doctrine; and the test whereby in that day or in that part of the world where the apostle now resided (for in various seasons, and in various churches, tests were different) must be this; *hereby know ye the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God*, ver. 2. Or, *that confesseth Jesus Christ that came in the flesh*. Jesus Christ is to be confessed as the Son of God, the eternal Life and Word, that was with the Father from the beginning; as the Son of God that came into, and came in our human mortal nature, and therein suffered and died at Jerusalem: He that confesseth and preacheth this, by a mind supernaturally instructed and enlightened therein, does it by the Spirit of God, or God is the author of that illumination: And, on the contrary, every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, (or that Jesus Christ that came in the flesh) is not of God, ver. 3. God has given so much testimony to Jesus Christ, that was lately here in the world, and in the flesh (or in a fleshly body like ours) though now in heaven, that ye may be assured that any impulse or pretended inspiration that contradicts this, is far from being from heaven and of God: The sum of revealed religion is comprehended in the doctrine concerning Christ, his person and office: We see then the aggravation of a formed opposition against him and it: *And this is that Spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world*, ver. 3. It was foreknown by God, that antichrists would arise, and antichristian spirits oppose his Spirit and his truth: it was foreknown also that one eminent antichrist would arise, and make a long and fatal war against the Christ of God, and his institution, and honour, and kingdom in the world; this great antichrist would have his way prepared, and his rise facilitated by other lesser antichrists, and that the spirit of error working and disposing men's minds for him; the antichristian spirit began betimes, even in the apostles days: Dreadful and unsearchable is the judgment of God, that persons should be given over to an antichristian spirit, and to such darkness and delusion, as to set themselves against the Son of God, and all the testimony that the Father hath given to the Son! but we have been foretold and forewarned that such opposition would arise; we should therefore cease to be offended; and the more we see the word of Christ fulfilled, the more confirmed we should be in the truth of it.

4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. 5. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6. We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

In these verses the apostle encourages the disciples against the fear and danger of this seducing antichristian spirit, and that by such methods as these: 1. He assures them of a more divine principle in them: *Ye are of God little children*, ver. 4. *Ye are God's little children: We are of God*, ver. 6. *We are born of God*, taught of God, anointed of God, and so secured against infectious fatal delusions; God has his chosen, that shall not be mortally seduced. 2. He gives them hope of victory: *And have overcome them*, ver. 4. Ye have hitherto overcome these deceivers and their temptations, and there is good ground of hope that ye will do so still, and that upon these two accounts: 1. There is a strong preserver within you; *because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*, ver. 4. The spirit of God dwells in you, and that Spirit is more mighty than men or devils: it is a great happiness to be under the influence of the Holy Ghost. 2. Ye are not of the same temper with these deceivers; the Spirit of God hath framed your mind for God and heaven; *but they are of the world*: The spirit that prevails in them, leads them to this world, their heart is addicted thereto; they study the pomp, the pleasure and interest of the world; and therefore speak they of the world: They profess a worldly Messiah and saviour, they project a worldly kingdom and dominion: The possessions and treasures of the world would they ingross to themselves, forgetting that the true Redeemer's kingdom is not of this world; and this worldly design procures them profelytes: *And the world heareth them*, ver. 5. They are followed by such as themselves; the world will love its own, and its own will love it. But they are in a fair way to conquer pernicious seductions, they have conquered the love of this seducing world. Then, 3. He represents to them, that though their company might be the smaller, yet it was the better: They

had more divine and holy knowledge: *He that knoweth God, heareth us*: He that knows the purity and holiness of God, the love and grace of God, the truth and faithfulness of God, the ancient word and prophecies of God, the signals and testimonials of God, must know that he is with us; and he that knows this, will attend to us and abide with us: He that is well furnished with natural religion, will the more faithfully cleave to the Christian. *He that knoweth God* (in his natural and moral excellencies, revelations and works) *heareth us*, ver. 6. As on the contrary, *he that is not of God, heareth us not*: He that knows not God regards not us: He that is not born of God (walking according to his natural disposition) walks not with us. The further they are from God (as appears in all ages) the further they are from Christ, and his faithful servants. And the more addicted persons are to this world, the more remote they are from the spirit of Christianity. And thus you have a distinction betwixt us and others. *Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*, ver. 6. This doctrine concerning the Saviour's person leading you from the world to God, is a signature of the Spirit of truth, in opposition to the spirit of error. The more pure and holy any doctrine is, the more likely to be of God.

7. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. 9. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

As the Spirit of truth is known by doctrine (so spirits are to be tried) it is known by love likewise; and so here follows a strong fervent exhortation to holy Christian love: *Beloved, let us love one another*, ver. 7. The apostle would unite them together in his love, that he may unite them in love to each other: *Beloved, I beseech you by the love I bear to you, that you put on unfeigned mutual love*: This exhortation is pressed and urged with variety of argument: As, 1. From the high and heavenly descent of love: *For love is of God*: He is the Fountain, Author, Parent, and Commander of love. It is the sum of his law and gospel. *And every one that loveth* (whose spirit is framed to judicious holy love) *is born of God*, ver. 7. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love: The new nature in the children of God is the offspring of his love. And the temper and complexion of it is love. *The fruit of the Spirit is love*, Gal. v. 22. Love comes down from heaven.

2. Love argues a true and just apprehension of the divine nature. *He that loveth knoweth God*, ver. 7. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God*, ver. 8. What attribute of the Divine Majesty so clearly shines in all the world as his communicative goodness, which is love? The wisdom, the greatness, the harmony, and usefulness of the vast creation, that so fully demonstrate his being, do at the same time shew and prove his love; and natural reason inferring and collecting the nature and excellence of the most absolute perfect being, must collect and find that he is most highly good; and he that loveth not (is not quickened by the knowledge he hath of God to the affection and practice of love) *knoweth not God*; it is a convictive evidence that the sound and due knowledge of God dwells not in such a soul; his love must needs shine among his primary brightest perfections; *for God is love*, ver. 8. his nature and essence is love; his will and works are primarily love: Not that this is the only conception we are to have of him; we have found that he is light as well as love; chap. i. 5. and God is principally love to himself, and he has such perfections as arise from the necessary love he must bear to his necessary existence, excellence, and glory; but love is natural and essential to the Divine Majesty; *God is love*; that *God is love*, is argued from the display and demonstration that he hath given of it; as,

1. That he hath loved us, such as we are. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us*, ver. 9. towards us mortals; us ungrateful rebels. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us*. Rom. v. 8. Strange, that God should love impure, vain, vile dust and ashes! 2. That he hath loved us at such a rate; at such an incomparable value as he has given for us; he has given his own, only beloved, blessed Son for us. *Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*, ver. 9. This person is in some peculiar distinguishing way the Son of God; he is the only begotten: Should we suppose him begotten as a creature or created being, he is not the only begotten: Should we suppose him a natural necessary emanation from the Father's glory, or glorious essence (or substance) he must be the only begotten. And then it will be a mystery and miracle of divine love, that such a Son should be sent into our world for us! It may well be said, *so* (so wonderfully, so amazingly, so incredibly) *God loved the world*. 3. That God loved us first, and in the circumstances in which we lay. *Herein is love*, (unusual unprecedented love) *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*, ver. 10. *He loved us*, when we had no love for him; when we lay in our guilt, misery, and blood; when we were undeserving, ill-deserving, polluted, and unclean, and wanted to be washed from our sins in sacred blood. 4. That he gave up his Son for such service, and such an end; for such service, *to be the propitiation for our sins*; consequently to die for us, to die under the law and curse of God, to bear our sins in his own body, to be crucified, to be wounded in his soul and pierced in his side, to be dead and buried for us, ver. 10. and then for such an end, for such a good and beneficial end to us, *that we might live through him*, ver. 9. *might live, for ever through him, might live in heaven, live with God, and live in eternal glory and blessedness with him and through him*: O what love is here! Then,

3. Divine love to the brethren should constrain ours. *Beloved, (I would adjure you by your interest in my love to remember) if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*, ver. 11. This should be an invincible argument. The examples of God should press us. *We should be followers* (or imitators) *of him, as his dear children*. The objects of the divine love should be the object of ours: Shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved? We should be admirers of his love, and lovers of his love (of that benevolence and complacency that is in him) and consequently lovers of those whom he loves. The general love of God to the world should induce an universal love among mankind; *that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh the son to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust*, Matt. v. 45. The

peculiar love of God to the church and to the saints should be productive of a peculiar love there: *If God so loved us, we ought surely* (in some measure suitably thereto) *to love one another.*

4. The Christian love is an assurance of the divine inhabitation. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, ver. 12.* Now God dwelleth in us, not by any visible presence, or immediate appearance to the eye; *no man hath seen God at any time, ver. 12.* but by his Spirit, *ver. 13.* or, *no man hath seen God at any time;* he does not here present himself to our eye or to our immediate intuition, and so he does not that way demand and exact our love; but he demands and expects it in that way in which he has thought meet to deserve and claim it, and that is in the illustration that he has given of himself and of his love (and thereupon of his loveliness too) in the catholic church, and particularly in the brethren, the members of that church; in them, and in his appearance for them and with them, is God to be loved; and thus, *if we love one another, God dwelleth in us:* the sacred lovers of the brethren are the temples of God; the Divine Majesty has a peculiar residence there.

5. Therein the divine love attains a considerable end and accomplishment in us. *And his love is perfected in us, ver. 12.* It hath obtained its completion in and upon us: *God's love is not perfected in him, but in and with us:* His love could not be designed to be ineffectual and fruitless upon us; wherein its proper genuine end and issue is attained and produced thereby, it may be said to be perfected; so faith is perfected by its works, and love perfected by its operations: When the divine love hath wrought us to the same image, to the love of God, and thereupon to the love of the brethren, the children of God, for his sake, it is therein and so far perfected and completed, though this love of ours is not at present perfect, nor the ultimate end of the divine love to us: How ambitious should we be of this fraternal Christian love, when God reckons his own love to us perfected thereby? To this the apostle having mentioned the high favour of God's dwelling in us, subjoins the note and character thereof; *hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit, ver. 13.* Certainly this mutual inhabitation is something more noble and great than we are well acquainted with or can declare: One would think, that for God to dwell in us, and we in him, were words too high for mortals to use, had not God gone before us therein; What it is, hath been briefly said on chap. iii. 24. what it fully is, must be left to the revelation of the blessed world: But this mutual inhabitation we know, says the apostle, *because he hath given us of his Spirit;* he hath lodged the image and fruit of his Spirit in our hearts, *ver. 13.* and the Spirit that he hath given us appears to be his, or of him, since it is the Spirit of power, of zeal and magnanimity for God, of love to God and man, and of a sound mind, of an understanding well instructed in the affairs of God and religion, and his kingdom among men, 2 Tim. i. 7.

14. And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Since faith in Christ works love to God, and love to God must kindle love to the brethren, the apostle here confirms the prime article of the Christian faith, as the foundation of such love; where, 1. He proclaims the fundamental article of the Christian religion, which is so representative of the love of God: *And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, ver. 14.* We here see, 1. The Lord Jesus's relation to God, he is Son to the Father, such a Son as no one else is, and so as to be God with the Father. 2. His relation and office towards us, the Saviour of the world, he saves us by his death and example, and intercession, and Spirit, and power against the enemies of our salvation. 3. The ground on which he became so, by the mission of him; *the Father sent the Son,* he decreed and willed his coming hither, in and with the consent of the Son. 4. The apostles assurance of this, he and his brethren had seen it, they had seen the Son of God in his human nature, in his holy converse and works, in his transfiguration on the mount, in his death, and resurrection from the dead, and royal ascent to heaven; they had so seen him as to be satisfied that he was the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. 5. The apostle's attestation of this, in pursuance of such evidence; *we have seen and do testify;* the weight of this truth obliges us to testify it, the salvation of the world lies upon it, the evidence of the truth warrants us to testify it, our eyes, and ears and hands have been witnesses of it: Thereupon,

2. The apostle states the excellency, or the excellent privilege attending the due acknowledgment of this truth: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God, ver. 15.* This confession seems to include faith in the heart as the foundation of it; acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ; and profession in the life and conduct, in opposition to the flatteries or frowns of the world: *Thus no man says that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost* (by the external attestation and internal operation of the Holy Ghost) 1 Cor. xii. 3. And so he that thus confesses Christ, and God in him, is enriched with or possessed by the Spirit of God, and has a complacential knowledge of God, and much holy enjoyment of him: Then,

3. The apostle applies this in order to the excitation of holy love; God's love is thus seen and exerted in Christ Jesus; and thus have we known and believed the love that God hath to us, ver. 16. The Christian revelation is, what should endear it to us, the revelation of the divine love: the articles of our revealed faith are but so many articles relating to the divine love; the history of the Lord Christ is the history of God's love to us all; all his transactions in and with his Son were but testifications of his love to us, and means to advance us to the love of God; *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, 2 Cor. v. 19.* And hence we may learn, 1. That God is love, ver. 16. he is essential boundless love: he has incomparable incomprehensible love for us of this world, which he has demonstrated in the mission and whole mediation of his beloved Son: It is the great objection and prejudice against the Christian revelation, that the love of God should be so strange and unaccountable as to give his own eternal Son for us; it is the prejudice of many against the eternity and the deity of the Son, that so great a person should be given for us: It is, I confess, mysterious and unsearchable; but there are unsearchable riches in Christ; it is pity the vastness of the divine love should be made a prejudice against the revelation and the belief of it: But what will not God do when he designs to demonstrate the height of any perfection of his? When he should shew somewhat of his power and wisdom, he makes such a world as this; when he would shew more of his grandeur and glory, he makes heaven for the ministering spirits that are before the throne; what will he not do then, when he designs to demonstrate his love, and to demonstrate his highest love, or that he himself is love, or that love is one of the most bright,

dear, transcendent, operative excellencies of his unbounded nature: and to demonstrate this not only to us, but to the angelical world, and to the principalities and powers above, and this not for our surprise for a while, but for the admiration, and praise, and adoration of our most exalted powers to all eternity? What will not God then do? Surely then it will look more agreeable to the design and grandeur, and pregnancy of his love, if I may so call it, to give an eternal Son for us, than to make a Son on purpose for our relief: In such a dispensation as that of giving a natural eternal Son for us and to us, he will commend his love to us indeed; and what will not the God of love do when he designs to commend his love? and to commend it in the view of heaven, and earth and hell? and when he will commend himself and recommend himself to us, and to our highest conviction and also affection, as love itself? And what if it should appear at last, which I shall only offer to the consideration of the judicious, that the divine love, and particularly God's love in Christ, should be the foundation of the glories of heaven, in the present enjoyment of those ministering spirits that comforted with it, and of the salvation of this world, and of the torments of hell? This last will seem more strange: But what if therein it should appear not only that God is love to himself, in vindicating his own law and government, and love and glory but that the damned ones are made so, or are so punished, 1. Because they despised the love of God already manifested and exhibited: 2. Because they refused to be beloved in what was further proposed and promised: And, 3. Because they made themselves unequal to be the objects of divine complacency and delight? If the consciences of the damned should accuse them of these things, and especially of rejecting the highest instance of divine love; if the far greatest part of the intelligent creation should be everlastingly blessed through the highest instance of the divine love, then may it well be inscribed upon the whole creation of God, *God is love.*

2. That hereupon, he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him, ver. 16. there is great communion between the God of love and the loving soul, i. e. he that loves the creation of God, according to its different relation to God, and reception from him and interest in him; he that dwells in sacred love, has the love of God shed abroad upon his heart, has the impress of God upon his spirit, the Spirit of God sanctifying and sealing him, lives in the meditation, views and tastes of the divine love, and will ere long go to dwell with God for ever.

17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world. 18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear. because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love. 19. We love him, because he first loved us. 20. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

The apostle having thus excited and enforced sacred love from the great pattern and motive of it, the love that is and dwells in God himself, proceeds to recommend it further by other considerations, and he recommends it in both the branches of it, both as love to God, and love to our brother or Christian neighbour.

(1.) As love to God, to the *primum amabile*, the first and chief of all amiable beings and objects, he that hath the confluence of all beauty, excellence and loveliness in himself, and confers on all other beings whatever renders them good and amiable; love to God seems here to be recommended on these accounts:

1. It will give us peace and satisfaction of spirit in the day when it will be most needed, or when it will be the greatest pleasure and blessing imaginable: *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, ver. 17.* There must be a day of universal judgment, happy that they shall have holy fiducial boldness before the Judge at that day; that shall be able to lift up their heads and to look him in the face, as knowing he is their friend and advocate! happy they that have holy boldness and assurance in the prospect of that day, that look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance! so do, and so may do the lovers of God; their love to God assures them of God's love to them, and consequently of the friendship of the Son of God; the more we love our friend, especially when we are sure that he knows it, the more we can trust his love: As God is good and loving and faithful to his promise, so we can easily be persuaded of his love, and the happy fruits of his love, when we can say, *Thou that knowest all things, knowest that we love thee; and hope maketh not ashamed, our hope conceived by the consideration of God's love, will not defeat us because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us, Rom. v. 5.* Possibly here by the love of God may be meant our love to God, that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that is the foundation of our hope, or of our assurance that our hope will hold good at last. Or, if by the love of God is meant the sense and apprehension of his love to us, yet that must suppose or include us as lovers of him in this case; and indeed the sense and evidence of his love to us sheds abroad in our hearts love to him; and thereupon we have confidence towards him, and peace and joy in him; *he will give the crown of righteousness to all that love his appearing;* and we have this boldness towards Christ, because of our conformity to him, *because as he is so are we in this world, ver. 17.* love hath conformed us to him; as he was the great lover of God and man, he hath taught us in our measure to be so too, and he will not deny his own image; love teaches us to conform in sufferings too; we suffer for him and with him, and therefore cannot but hope and trust that we shall also be glorified together with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12.

2. It prevents or removes the uncomfortable result and fruit of servile fear; *there is no fear in love, ver. 18.* so far as love prevails, fear ceases: We must here distinguish, I judge, between fear and being afraid; or in this case, between the fear of God and being afraid of him; the fear of God is often mentioned and commended as the substance of religion, 1 Pet. ii. 17. Rev. xiv. 7. and so it imports the high regard and veneration we have for God and his authority and government; such fear is consistent with love, yea with perfect love, as being in the angels themselves; but then there is a being afraid of God that arises from a sense of guilt, and a view of his vindictive perfections; in the view of them God is represented as a consuming fire; and so fear here may be rendered dread; *there is no dread in love;* love considers its object as good and excellent, and therefore amiable, and worthy to be beloved; love considers God as most eminently good, and most eminently loving us in Christ, and so puts off dread and puts on joy in him; and as love grows, joy grows too; so that perfect love casteth out fear or dread: They that perfectly love God are, from his nature,

nature, and counsel and covenant, perfectly assured of his love, and consequently are perfectly free from any dismal dreadful suspicions of his punitive power and justice, as armed against them: They well know that God loves them, and they thereupon triumph in his love: That *perfect love casteth out fear*, the apostle thus sensibly argues, that that *casteth out torment*, casteth out fear or dread, *because fear hath torment*, ver. 18. fear is known to be a disquieting, torturing passion, especially such a fear as is the dread of an almighty avenging God, *but perfect love casteth out torment*, for it teaches the mind a perfect acquiescence and complacency in the beloved, and therefore *perfect love casteth out fear*; Or, which is here equivalent, *he that feareth is not made perfect in love*, ver. 18. it is a sign that our love is far from being perfect, since our doubts and fears, and dismal apprehensions of God are so many: Let us long for, and hasten to the world of perfect love, where our serenity and joy in God will be as perfect as our love!

3. From the source and rise of it, which is the antecedent love of God; *We love him because he first loved us*, ver. 19. His love is the incentive, the motive and moral cause of ours: We cannot but love so good a God that was first in the act and work of love; that *loved us* when we were both unloving and unlovely; that *loved us* at so great a rate; that has been seeking and soliciting our love at the expence of his son's blood, and hath condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him; Let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love! His love is the productive cause of ours: *Of his own will* (of his own free loving will) *begat he us*; *To those that love him all things work together for good, to them who are the called according to his purpose*; they that love God are the called thereto according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28. according to whose purpose they are called, is sufficiently intimated in the following clauses, *whom he did predestinate*, or antecedently purpose, viz. to the image of his Son, *them he also called*, effectually recovered thereto: The divine love instamped love upon our souls; may the Lord still and further direct our hearts into the love of God! 2 Theff. ii. 5.

(2.) As love to our brother and neighbour in Christ: such love is argued and urged on these accounts:

1. As suitable and consonant to our Christian profession: In the profession of Christianity we profess to love God as the root of religion: *If then a man say, or profess as much as thereby to say, I love God, I am a lover of his name, and house and worship, and yet hate his brother*, whom he should love for God's sake, *he is a liar*, ver. 20. he therein giveth his profession the lie: That such a one loveth not God the apostle proveth, by the usual facility of loving what is seen rather than what is unseen: *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* ver. 20. The eye is wont to affect the heart; things unseen do less catch the mind, and thereby the heart: the incomprehensibility of God does very much arise from his invisibility; the member of Christ has much of God visible in him; how then shall the hater of a visible image of God pretend to love the unseen original, the invisible God himself?

2. As suitable to the express law of God, and the just reason of it: *And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also*, ver. 21. As God has communicated his image in nature and in grace, so he would have our love to be suitably diffused: We must love God originally and supremely, and others in him on the account of their derivation and reception from him, and of his interest in them: Now, our Christian brethren having a new nature and excellent privileges derived from God, and God having his interest in them as well as in us, it cannot but be a natural suitable obligation, that he that loves God should love his brother also.

C H A P. V.

In this chapter the apostle asserts, 1. The dignity of believers, ver. 1. Then 2. their obligation to love, and the trial of it, ver. 1, 2, 3. Then, 3. Their victory, ver. 4, 5. Then, 4. The credibility and confirmation of their faith, ver. 6—10. Then, 5. The advantage of their faith in eternal life, ver. 11, 12, 13. Then, 6. The audience of their prayers, unless for those that have sinned unto death, ver. 14—17. Then, 7. Their preservation from sin and Satan, ver. 18. Then, 8. Their happy distinction from the world, ver. 19. Then, 9. Their true knowledge of God, ver. 20. Upon which they must depart from idols, ver. 21.

1. **W**HOSOEVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. 3. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. 4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

The apostle having, as was there observed, in the conclusion of the last chapter, urged Christian love upon those two accounts: 1. As suitable to Christian profession; 2. As suitable to the divine command; here adds a third; such love is suitable, or indeed demanded by their eminent relation; our Christian brethren or fellow-believers are nearly related to God; they are his children; *Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*; ver. 1. Wherein the Christian brother is, 1. Described by his faith; he that believeth that *Jesus is the Christ*; that he is Messiah the Prince; that he is the Son of God by nature and office: that he is the chief of all the anointed world; chief of all the priests, prophets, or kings, that were ever anointed by God or for him; that he is perfectly prepared and furnished for the whole work of the eternal salvation; and the believer accordingly yields himself up to his care and conduct; and then he is, 2. Dignified by his descent; *he is born of God*, ver. 1. The principle of faith, and the new nature that attends it, or for which it springs, is ingenerated by the Spirit of God; and so sonship and adoption are not now appropriated to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, nor to the ancient Israel of God; all believers, though by nature sinners of the Gentiles, are spiritually descended from God, and accordingly are to be beloved; as it is added, *every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*, ver. 1. It seems but natural, that he that loves the father should love the children also; and that in some proportion to their resemblance to their Father, and to the Father's love to them; and so we must first and principally love the Son of the Father, as he is most emphatically styled, Eph. ii. 3. *the only* (necessarily) *begotten*, and the Son of his love, and then those that are voluntarily begotten, and renewed by the Spirit of grace; thereupon,

2. The apostle shews, 1. How we may discern the truth, or the true evangelical nature of our love to the regenerate, the ground of it must be our love to God, whose they are: *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God*, ver. 2. Our love to them appears to be sound and genuine when we love them, not merely upon any secular account, as because they are rich or learned or kind to us, or on our denomination among religious parties, but because they are God's children, his regenerating grace appears in them, his image and superscription is upon them, and so in them God himself is loved; and so we see what that love to the brethren is that is so pressed in his epistle; it is love to them as the children of God, and the adopted brethren of the Lord Jesus.

2. How we may learn the truth of our love to God, it appears in our holy obedience: *When we love God and keep his commandments*, ver. 2. Then we truly and in gospel account love God, *when we keep his commandments*; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and the keeping of his commandments requires a spirit inclined thereto and delighting therein; and to his commandments are not grievous, ver. 3. Or, this is the love of God, that, as thereby we are determined to obedience, and to keep the commandments of God, so his commandments are thereby made easy and pleasant to us: The lover of God says, *O how I love thy law! I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart*, Psalm cxix. 32. when thou shalt either enlarge it with love or with thy Spirit that is the spring of love.

3. What is and ought to be the result, an effect or regeneration, viz. an intellectual spiritual conquest of this world: *For whatsoever is born of God, or as in some copies, whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world*, ver. 4. he that is born of God is born for God, and consequently for another world; he has a temper and disposition that tends to an higher better world, and he is furnished with such arms, or such a weapon whereby he can repel and conquer this; as it is added, *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*, ver. 4. faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armour and artillery by which we overcome; for, 1. In and by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of and opposition to the world. 2. Faith works in and by love to God and Christ, and so withdraws us from the love of the world. 3. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from those sensual lusts, by which the world obtains such sway and dominion over souls. 4. It receives and derives strength from the object of it, the Son of God for conquering the frowns and flat-teries of the world. 5. It obtains by gospel promise a right to the indwelling Spirit of grace, that is greater than he that dwells in the world. 6. It sees an invisible world at hand, with which this world is not worthy to be compared, and into which it tells the soul, in which it resides, it must be continually prepared to enter; and thereupon,

3. The apostle concludes, that it is the real Christian that is the true conqueror of the world. *Who is he then that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* ver. 5. It is the world that lies in our way to heaven; and is the great impediment to our entrance there. But he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God, believes therein that Jesus came from God to be the Saviour of the world, and powerfully to conduct us from the world to heaven and to God, who is fully to be enjoyed there. And he that so believes must needs by this faith overcome the world. For, 1. He must be well satisfied that this world is a vehement enemy to his soul, to his holiness, his salvation, and his blessedness. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*, chap. ii. 16. 2. He sees it must be a great part of the Saviour's work, and of his own salvation, to be redeemed and rescued from this malignant world, *who gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world*, Gal. i. 4. 3. He sees in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth, that this world is to be renounced and overcome. 4. He perceives that the Lord Jesus conquered the world, not for himself only, but for his followers; and they must study to be partakers of his victory. *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*. 5. He is taught and influenced by the Lord Jesus's death to be mortified and crucified to the world. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world*, Gal. vi. 14. 6. He is begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to the lively hope of the blessed world above, 1 Pet. i. 3. 7. He knows that the Saviour is gone to heaven, and is there preparing a place for his serious believers, *John xiv. 2*. 8. He knows that his Saviour will come again from thence, and will put an end to this world, and judge the inhabitants of it, and receive his believers to his presence and glory, *John xiv. 3*. 9. He is possessed with a spirit and disposition that cannot be satisfied with this world, that looks beyond it, and is still tending, striving, and pressing towards the world in heaven. *In this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*, 2 Cor. v. 2. So that it is the Christian religion that affords its profelytes an universal empire. It is the Christian revelation that is the great means of conquering the world, and gaining another that is most pure and peaceful, blessed and eternal. It is there, in that revelation, that we see what is the occasion and ground of the quarrel and contest between the holy God and this rebellious world. It is there we meet with sacred doctrine (both speculative and practical) that is quite contrary to the tenour, temper, and tendency of this world. It is by that doctrine that a spirit is communicated and diffused, that is superior and adverse to the spirit of the world. It is there we see that the Saviour himself was not of this world, that his kingdom was not and is not so; that it must be separated from the world, and gathered out of it for heaven and for God. There we see that the Saviour designs not this world for the inheritance and portion of his saved company. As he is gone to heaven himself, so he assures them he goes to prepare for their residence there, as designing they should always dwell with him; and allowing them to believe that if in this life, and this world only, they had hope in him, they should at last be but miserable. It is there that the eternal blessed world is most clearly revealed and proposed to our affection and pursuit. It is there we are furnished with the best arms and artillery against the assaults and attempts of the world. It is there we are taught how the world may be outshot in its own bow, or its artillery turned against itself: and its oppositions, encounters, and persecutions be made serviceable to our conquest of the world, and to our motion and ascent to the higher heavenly world; and there we are encouraged by a whole army and cloud of holy soldiers, that have in their several ages, posts and stations overcome the world, and won the crown. It is the real Christian that is the proper hero; that vanquishes the world, and rejoices in an universal victory. And then (as being far superior to the Grecian monarch) mourns not that there is not another world to be subdued, but lays hold on the eternal world of life, and in a sacred sense takes the kingdom of heaven by violence too. Who in all the world but the believer of Jesus Christ can thus overcome the world?

6. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the

the Spirit is truth. 7. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.

The faith of the Christian believer (or the believer in Christ) being thus mighty and victorious, it had need to be well founded; to be furnished with unquestionable celestial evidence concerning the divine mission, authority and office of the Lord Jesus; and it is so; he brings his credentials along with him: and he brings them, 1. In the way by which he came. 2. In the witnesses that attends him.

1. In the way and manner by which he came. Not barely by which he came into the world; but by and with which he came and appeared, and acted as a Saviour in the world; *this is he that came by water and blood.* He came to save us from our sins; to give us eternal life and bring us to God, and that he might the more assuredly do this, *he came by, or with water and blood; even Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ, I say, did so; and none but he. And I say it again, not by or with *water only, but by and with water and blood,* ver. 6. *Jesus Christ came with water and blood,* as the notes and signatures of the true effectual Saviour of the world. And he came by water and blood, as the means by which he would heal and save us. That he must and did thus come in his saving office, may appear by our remembering these things. 1. We are inwardly and outwardly defiled. Inwardly, by the power and pollution of sin in our nature. For our cleansing from this we need spiritual water; such as can reach the soul and the powers of it. Accordingly, there is in and by Jesus Christ, *the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* And this was intimated to the apostles by our Lord when he washed their feet; and said to Peter that refused it, *Except I wash thee, thou hast no part in me.* Outwardly by the guilt and condemning power of sin upon our persons. By this we are separated from God, and banished from his favourable, gracious, beatific presence for ever. From this we must be purged by atoning blood. It is the law or determination in the court of heaven, *that without shedding of blood there shall be no remission,* Heb. ix. 22. The Saviour from sin therefore must come with blood. 2. Both these ways of cleansing were represented in the old ceremonial institutions of God. Persons and things must be purified by water and blood. *There were divers washings and carnal ordinances imposed till the time of reformation,* Heb. ix. 10. *The ashes of an heifer, mixt with water, sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh,* Heb. ix. 13. Numb. xix. 19. *And likewise, almost all things are, by the law purged with blood,* Heb. ix. 22. As these shew us our double defilement, so they indicate the Saviour's twofold purgation. 3. At and upon the death of Jesus Christ, his side being pierced with a soldier's spear, out of the wound there immediately issued water and blood. This the beloved apostle saw, and seems to be affected with the sight; and he alone records it, and seems to reckon himself obliged to record it, as containing something mysterious in it. *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true.* And he knoweth, being an eye-witness, *that he saith true, that ye might believe, and that ye may believe this particularly, that out of his pierced side forthwith there came water and blood,* John xix. 35. Now this water and blood are comprehensive of all that is necessary and effectual to our salvation. By the water our souls are washed and purified for heaven and the region of saints in light. By the blood God is glorified, his law is honoured, and his vindictive excellencies illustrated and displayed. *Whom God hath set forth, or purposed or proposed, a propitiation through faith in his blood, or a propitiation in or by his blood through faith, to declare his righteousness that he may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,* Rom. iii. 25, 26. By the blood we are justified, reconciled and presented righteous to God. By the blood, the curse of the law being satisfied, the purifying Spirit is obtained for the internal ablution of our natures. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit, the promised Spirit, through faith,* Gal. iii. 13, &c. The water as well as the blood issued out of the side of the sacrificed Redeemer. The water and the blood then comprehended all things that can be requisite to our salvation. They will consecrate and sanctify to that purpose all that God shall appoint to make use of in order to that great end. *He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church,* Eph. v. 25—27. He that comes by water and blood is an accurate perfect Saviour. And this is he that comes by water and blood, even as Jesus Christ! Thus we see in what way and manner, or if you please, with what utensils, he comes. But see we his credential also.

2. In the witness that attends him, and that is, the divine Spirit: that Spirit to whom the perfecting of the works of God is usually attributed. *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness,* ver. 6. It was meet that the commissioned Saviour of the world should have a constant agent to support his work, and testify of him to the world. It was meet a divine power should attend him, his gospel and servants: and notify to the world, upon what errand and office they came, and by what authority they were sent: And this was done in and by the Spirit of God: According to the Saviour's own prediction, *He shall glorify me, even when I shall be rejected and crucified by men, for he shall receive or take of mine, he shall not receive my immediate office: he shall not die and rise again for you; but he shall receive of mine; shall proceed on the foundation I have laid, shall take up my institution and truth and cause, and shall further shew it unto you, and by you to the world,* John xvi. 14. And then the apostle adds the commendation, or the acceptableness of this witness, *because the Spirit is truth,* ver. 6. He is the Spirit of God and cannot lye. There is a copy that would afford us a very suitable reading thus; *because, or that, Christ is the truth.* And so it indicates the matter of the Spirit's testimony; the thing which he attests, and that is the truth of Christ. *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness that Christ is the truth;* and consequently that Christianity, or the Christian religion is the truth of day, is the truth of God. But it is not meet that one or two copies should alter the text; and our present reading is very agreeable, and so we retain it. *The Spirit is truth.* He is indeed the Spirit of truth, John xiv. 17. And that the Spirit is truth, and a witness worthy of all acceptance, appears in that he is an heavenly witness, or one of the witnesses that in and from heaven bare testimony concerning the truth and authority of Christ. *Because (or for) there are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* And so, ver. 7. most appositely occurs, as a proof of the authenticity of the Spirit's testimony; he must needs be true, or even truth itself, if he be not only a witness in heaven; but even one, (not in testimony only, for so an angel may be, but in being and essence) *with the Father and the Word.*

But here we are stopped in our course by the contest there is about the genuineness of ver. 7. It is alledged that many old Greek manuscripts

have it not. We shall not here enter into the controversy. It should seem that the critics are not agreed what manuscripts have it and what not, nor do they sufficiently inform us of the integrity and value of the manuscripts they peruse. Some may be so faulty, as I have an old printed Greek Testament so full of *errata*, as that one would think no critic would establish a various lection thereupon: But let the judicious collators of copies manage that business: There are some rational surmises that seem to support the present text and reading. As, 1. If we admit ver. 8. in the room of ver. 7. it looks too like a tautology and repetition of what was included in ver. 6. *This is he that came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood; and it is the Spirit that beareth witness. For there are three that bear witness; the Spirit, the water, and the blood.* This does not assign near so noble an introduction of these three witnesses as our present reading does. 2. It is observed that many copies read that distinctive clause, *upon the earth.* *There are three that bear record upon the earth.* Now this bears a visible opposition to some witnesses or witnesses elsewhere, and therefore we are told by the adversaries of the text, that this clause must be supposed to be omitted in most books that want ver. 7. But it should for the same reason be so in all. Take we ver. 6. *This is he that came by water and blood: And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth:* It would not now naturally and properly be added, *for there are three that bear record on earth;* unless we would suppose that the apostle would tell us that all the witnesses are such as are on earth, when yet he would assure us that one is infallibly true, or even truth itself. 3. It is observed, that there is variety of reading even in the Greek text, as in ver. 7. Some copies read *in vision, are one*, others (at least the Complutensian) *is to vision, are to one, or agree in one;* and in ver. 8. (in that part that it is supposed should be admitted) instead of the common *in vision, on earth,* the Complutensian reads *in vision, which seems to shew that that edition depended upon some Greek authority; and not merely, as some would have us believe, upon the authority either of the vulgar Latin or of Thomas Aquinas;* though his testimony may be added thereto. 4. Ver. 7. is very agreeable to the style and the theology of our apostle, as, 1. He delights in the title: *The Father;* whether he indicates thereby God only, or a divine person distinguished from the Son. *I and the Father are one.* And yet I am not alone; *because the Father is with me. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Grace be with—and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father,* Eph. ii. 3. Then, 2. The name, *the Word,* is known to be almost (if not quite) peculiar to this apostle. Had the text been devised by another, it had been more easy and obvious from the form of baptism, and the common language of the church, to have used the name Son instead of that of the Word. As it is observed that Tertullian and Cyprian use that name, even when they refer to this verse; or it is made an objection against their referring to this verse, because they speak of the Son, not the Word; and yet Cyprian's expression seems to be very clear by the citation of Facundus himself. *Quod Johannis apostoli testimonium B. Cyprianus Carthaginensis antistes & martyr, in epistola sive libro, quem de Trinitate scripsit, de Patre, Filio, & Spiritu sancto dictum intelligit; ait enim, dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum sumus; and iterum de Patre, Filio & Spiritu sancto scriptum est, & hi tres unum sunt.* Now it is no where written that these are one but in ver. 7. It is probable then that St. Cyprian, either depending on his memory, or rather intending things more than words, persons more than names, or calling persons by their names more usual in the church (both in popular and polemic discourses) called the second by the name of the Son rather than of the Word. If any man can admit Facundus's fancy, viz. that St. Cyprian meant that the Spirit, the water and the blood were indeed the Father, Word and Spirit, that St. John said were one, he may enjoy his opinion to himself. For, 1. He must suppose that Cyprian not only changed all the names, but the apostle's order too. For the blood (the Son) which Cyprian puts second, the apostle puts last. And, 2. He must suppose that Cyprian thought, that by the blood which issued out of the side of the Son, the apostle intended the Son himself, who might as well have been denoted by the water. That by the water which also issued from the side of the Son, the apostle intended the person of the Holy Ghost; that by the Spirit, which in ver. 6. is said to be truth, and in the gospel is called the Spirit of truth, the apostle meant the person of the Father; though he is no where else so called when joined with the Son and the Holy Ghost. Which had need of good proof that the Carthaginian father could so understand the apostle. And he that so understands him must believe too that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are said to be three witnesses on earth. 3. Facundus acknowledges that St. Cyprian says, that of his three it is written, *hi tres unum sunt, and these three are one.* Now these are the words not of ver. 8. but of ver. 7. Not used concerning the three on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, but the three in heaven, the Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghost. So we are told that the author of the book *De baptismo hæreticorum*, allowed to be contemporary with Cyprian, cites St. John's words, agreeably to the Greek manuscripts and the ancient versions, thus, *Ait enim Johannes de Domino nostro in epistola nos docens, hic est qui venit per aquam & sanguinem, Jesus Christus non in aqua tantum, sed in aqua & sanguine; & Spiritus est qui testimonium perhibet, quia Spiritus est veritas; quia tres testimonium perhibent, Spiritus est aqua & sanguis, & isti tres in unum sunt.* If all the Greek manuscripts and ancient versions say concerning the Spirit, the water, and the blood, that, *in unum sunt,* they agree in one; then it was not of them that Cyprian spake, whatever variety there might be in the copies in his time, when he said, it is written, *unum sunt,* they are one. And therefore Cyprian's words seem still to be a firm testimony to ver. 7. and an intimation likewise, that a forger of the text would have scarce so exactly hit upon the apostolical name for the second witness in heaven, *the Word.* Then, 3. As this apostle only records the history of the water and blood flowing out of the Saviour's side, so it is he only or he principally that registers to us the Saviour's promise and prediction of the Holy Spirit's coming to glorify him, and to testify of him, and to convince the world of its own unbelief, and of his own righteousness, as in his gospel, chap. xiv. 16, 17, 26. chap. xv. 26. chap. xvi. 7—15. It is most suitable then to the dictum and to the gospel of this apostle, thus to mention the Holy Ghost as a witness for Jesus Christ. Then, 5. It was far more easy for a transcriber, by turning away his eye, or by the obscurity of the copy, it being obliterated or defaced in the top or bottom of a page, or worn away in such materials as the ancients had to write upon, to lose and omit the passage, than for an interpolator to devise and insert it; he must be very bold and impudent that could hope to escape detection and shame; and profane too, that durst venture to make an addition to a supposed sacred book. And, 6. It can scarce be supposed, that when the apostle is representing the strength of the Christian's faith in overcoming the world, and the foundation it relies upon the adhering to Jesus Christ, and the various testimony that was given to Jesus Christ in the world, he should omit the supreme testimony that attended him, especially when we consider that he meant to infer, as he does ver. 9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this that he had rehearsed before, is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* Now in the three witnesses on earth, there is neither all the witness of God, nor indeed any witness that is truly and immediately God. The Antitrinitarian opposers of the text will deny that either the Spirit, or the water,

water, or the blood, are God himself; and others may say that the Spirit here is some created effect of God; but upon our present reading here is a noble enumeration of the several witnesses and testimonies supporting the truth of the Lord Jesus, and the divinity of his institution; here is the most excellent abridgment or breviate of the motives to faith in Christ, of the credentials the Saviour brings with him of the evidences of our Christianity, that is to be found, I think, in the book of God; upon which single account, even waving the doctrine of the divine Trinity, the entire text is worthy of all acceptance.

Having these rational grounds on our side we proceed: The apostle having told us that the Spirit that bears witness to Christ is truth, shews us that he is so, by assuring us that he is in heaven, and that there are others also who cannot but be true, or truth itself, concurring in testimony with him; *for there are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*, ver. 7. Here is a Trinity of heavenly witnesses; such as have testified and vouched to the world the veracity and the authority of the Lord Jesus in his office and claims, where the first that occurs in order is the Father; he set his seal to the commission of the Lord Christ all the while he was here; more especially, 1. In proclaiming him at his baptism, *Matt. iii. 17.* Then, 2. In confirming his character at the transfiguration, *Matt. xvii. 5.* Then, 3. In accompanying him with miraculous power and works. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*, John x. 37, 38. 4. In avouching at his death, *Matt. xxiv. 54.* 5. In raising him from the dead, and receiving him up to his glory. *He shall convince the world—of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more*, John xvi. 10, and *Rom. i. 4.* The second witness is the Word; a mysterious name! importing the highest nature that belongs to the Saviour Jesus Christ; such as wherein he existed before the world was, and whereby he made the world, and whereby he was truly God with the Father. He must bear witness to the human nature or to the man Christ Jesus, in and by whom he redeemed and saved us; and he bore witness, 1. By the mighty works that he wrought, *John v. 17. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* 2. In conferring a glory upon him at his transfiguration. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, John i. 14. 3. In raising him from the dead, *John ii. 19. Destroy this temple and in three days will I raise it up.* The third witness is the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit; an august, venerable name! the possessor, proprietor and author of holiness. True and faithful must he be to whom the Spirit of holiness sets his seal and solemn testimony. So he did to the Lord Jesus, the head of the Christian world; and that in such instances as these; 1. In the miraculous production of his immaculate human nature in the Virgin's womb. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, Luke i. 35, &c. 2. In the visible descent upon him at his baptism. *The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape*, Luke iii. 22, &c. 3. In an effectual conquest of the spirits of hell and darkness. *If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you*, Matt. xii. 28. 4. In the visible potent descent upon the apostles, to furnish them with gifts and powers to preach him and his gospel to the world after he himself was gone to heaven, *Acts i. 4, 5. chap. ii. 2, 3, 4, &c.* In supporting the name, gospel and interest of Christ, by miraculous gifts and operations by and upon the disciples and in the churches for two hundred years, *1 Cor. xii. 7.* Concerning which see Dr. Whitby's excellent discourse in the preface to the second volume of his *Commentary on the New Testament.* These are witnesses in heaven; and they bear record from heaven; and they are one. It should seem not only in testimony (for that is implied in their being three witnesses; *i. e.* to one and the same thing) but upon an higher account as they are in heaven; they are one in their heavenly being and essence; and if one with the Father they must be one God.

2. To these there is opposed, though with them conjoined, a trinity of witnesses on earth, such as continue here below. *And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree in one*, ver. 8. Of these witnesses the first is the Spirit. This must be distinguished from the person of the Holy Ghost who is in heaven. We must say then with the Saviour (according to what is reported by this apostle) *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, John iii. 6. The disciples of the Saviour are, as well as others, born after the flesh. They come into the world endued with a corrupt carnal disposition, which is enmity to God. This disposition must be mortified and abolished. A new nature must be communicated. Old lusts and corruptions must be eradicated, and the true disciple become a new creature. The regeneration and renovation of souls is a testimony to the Saviour. It is his actual though initial salvation. It is a testimony on earth, because it continues with the church there; and is not performed in that conspicuous astonishing manner in which signs from heaven are accomplished. To this Spirit belong not only the regeneration and conversion of the church, but its progressive sanctification, victory over the world, her peace and love and joy, and all that grace by which she is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Then the second is the Water. This was before considered as a means of salvation, now as a testimony to the Saviour himself, and intimates his purity and purifying power. And so it seems to comprehend, 1. The purity of his own nature and conduct in the world. *He was holy, harmless and undefiled.* 2. The testimony of John's baptism, who bore witness of him and prepared a people for him, and referred them unto him, *Mark i. 4, 7, 8.* 3. The purity of his own doctrine by which souls are purified and washed. *Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you*, John xv. 3. 4. The actual and active purity and holiness of his disciples. His body is the holy catholic church. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*, 1 Pet. i. 22. And this signified and sealed by, 5. The baptism that he has appointed for the initiation or introduction of his disciples; in which he signally (or by that sign) says, *Except I wash thee thou hast no part in me.* Not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Then there is, 3. The Blood: This he shed; and this was our ransom. This testifies for Jesus Christ: 1. In that it sealed up and finished the sacrifices of the Old Testament. *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.* 2. In that it confirmed his own predictions, and the truth of all his ministry and doctrine, *John xviii. 37.* 3. In that it shewed unparalleled love to God, in that he would die a sacrifice to his honour and glory in making atonement for the sins of the world, *John xiv. 30, 31.* 4. In that it demonstrated unspeakable love to us. And none will deceive those whom they entirely love, *John xiv. 13—15.* 5. In that it demonstrated the disinterestedness of the Lord Jesus as to any secular interest and advantage. No impostor and deceiver ever proposes to himself contempt and violent cruel death, *John xviii. 36.* 6. In that it lays obligation on his disciples to suffer and die for him. No deceiver would invite profelytes to his side and interest at the rate that the Lord Jesus did. *Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake. They shall put you out of their synagogues; and the time comes that whosoever kills you will think that he doth God service*, John xvi. 2. And he frequently calls his servants to a conformity with him in sufferings. *Let us go forth therefore*

unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach, Heb. xiii. 13. Which shews that neither he nor his kingdom is of this world. Then, 7. The benefits accruing and procured by his blood (well understood) must immediately demonstrate that he is indeed the Saviour of the world. And then, 8. These are signified and sealed in the institution of his own supper. *This is my blood of the New Testament (which ratifies the New Testament) which is shed for many for the remission of sins*, Matt. xxvi. 28. Such are the witnesses on earth. Such is the various testimony given to the author of our religion. No wonder if the rejecter of all this evidence be judged as a blasphemer of the Spirit of God, and be left to perish without remedy in his sins. These three witnesses (being more different than the three former) are not so properly said to be one, as to be for one; to be for one and the same purpose and cause; or to agree in one; in one and the same thing among themselves, and in the same testimony with those that bear record from heaven. Whereupon,

3. The apostle justly concludes, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God that he hath testified of his Son*, ver. 9. Where we have, 1. A supposition well founded upon the premises, Here is the witness of God: the witness whereby God hath testified of his Son; which surely must intimate some immediate irrefragable testimony, and that of the Father concerning his Son: he has by himself proclaimed and avouched him to the world. 2. The authority and acceptableness of his testimony; and that argued from the less to the greater. *If we receive the witness of men (and such testimony is and must be admitted in all judicatories and in all nations) the witness of God is greater.* It is truth itself, of highest authority and most unquestionable infallibility. And then there is, 3. The application of the rule to the present case. *For this is the witness*, and here is the witness, of God even of the Father, as well as of the World and Spirit, *which he hath testified of*, and wherein he hath attested, his Son. God, that cannot lye, hath given sufficient assurance to the world, that Jesus Christ is his Son; the Son of his love, and Son by office, to reconcile and recover the world unto himself; he testified therefore the truth and divine original of the Christian religion, and that it is the sure appointed way and means of bringing us to God:

10. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. 12. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 13. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that ye may know that ye have eternal life; and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

In these words we may observe, 1. The privilege and stability of the real Christian. *He that believeth on the Son of God*, hath been prevailed with unfeignedly to cleave to him for Salvation, *hath the witness in himself*, ver. 10. He hath not only the outward evidence that others have, but he hath in his own heart a testimony for Jesus Christ. He can alledge what Christ and the truth of Christ have done for his soul, and what he has seen, and found in him. As, 1. He has deeply seen his sin and guilt and misery, and his abundant need of such a Saviour. 2. He has seen the excellency, beauty, and office of the Son of God, and the incomparable suitableness of such a Saviour to all his spiritual wants and sorrowful circumstances. 3. He sees and admires the wisdom and love of God in preparing and sending such a Saviour to deliver him from sin and hell, and to raise him to pardon, peace, and communion with God. 4. He hath found and felt the power of the word and doctrine of Christ, wounding, humbling, healing, quickening, and comforting his soul. 5. He finds that the revelation of Christ, as it is the greatest discovery and demonstration of the love of God, so it is the most up and powerful means of kindling, fomenting, and inflaming love to the holy blessed God. 6. He is born of God by the truth of Christ, as ver. 1. He hath a new heart and nature; a new love, disposition, and delight, and is not the man that formerly he was. 7. He finds yet such a conflict with himself, with sin, with the flesh, the world and invisible wicked powers, as is described and provided for in the doctrine of Christ. 8. He finds such prospects, and such strength afforded him by the faith of Christ, that he can despise and overcome the world, and travel on towards a better. 9. He finds what interest the Mediator hath in heaven, by the audience and prevalence of those prayers that are sent thither in his name, according to his will and through his intercession. 10. He is begotten again unto a lively hope, to a holy confidence in God, in his good will and love; to a pleasant victory over terrors of conscience, dread of death and hell; to a comfortable prospect of life and immortality, being enriched with the earnest of the Spirit and sealed to the day of redemption. Such assurance has the gospel believer; he has a witness in himself. Christ is formed in him, and is growing up to the fulness and perfection, or perfect image of Christ in heaven.

2. The aggravation of the unbeliever's sin; the sin of unbelief. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar*; He does in effect give God the lye. *Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son*, ver. 10. He must believe, either that God did not send his Son into the world, when he has given such manifold evidence that he did. Or, that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, when all that evidence relates to and terminates upon him. Or, that he sent his Son to deceive the world, and to lead it into error and misery. Or, that he permits men to devise a religion, which, in all parts of it, is a pure, holy, heavenly, undefiled institution, and so worthy to be embraced by the reason of mankind, and yet is but a delusion and a lye; and then lends them his Spirit and power to recommend and obtrude it upon the world. Which is to make God the Father the author and abetter of the lye.

3. The matter, the substance or contents of all this divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son*, ver. 11. This is the sum of the gospel. This is the sum and epitome of the whole record given us by all the aforesaid six witnesses. 1. That God hath given to us eternal life. He hath designed it for us in his eternal purpose. He hath prepared all the means that are necessary to bring us thither. He hath made it over to us by his covenant and promise. And he actually confers a right and title thereto on all that believe on and actually embrace the Son of God. Then, 2. *This life is in his Son.* The Son is life, eternal life in his own essence and person, *John i. 4. 1 John i. 2.* He is eternal life to us; the spring of our spiritual and glorious life, *Col. iii. 4.* From him life is communicated to us, both here and in heaven. And thereupon it must follow, 1. *He that hath the Son hath life*, ver. 12. He that is united to the Son is united to life. He

He that hath title to the Son hath title to life, to eternal life. Such honour hath the Father put upon the Son. Such honour must we put upon him too. We must come and kiss the Son, and we shall have life. 2. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life*, ver. 12. He continues under the condemnation of the law, *John iii. 36*. He refuses the Son who is life itself, who is the procurer of life and the way to it. He provokes God to deliver him over to endless death for making him a liar; since he believes not this record that God hath given concerning his Son.

4. The end and reason of the apostle's preaching this to believers. 1. For their satisfaction and comfort. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, ver. 13. Upon all this evidence, and these witnesses, it is but just and meet that there should be those that believe on the name of the Son of God. God increase their number! How much testimony from heaven has the world to answer for! And to three witnesses in heaven must the world be accountable. These believers have eternal life. They have it in the covenant of the gospel; in the beginning and first-fruits of it within them, and in their Lord and head in heaven. These believers may come to know that they have eternal life, and should be quickened, encouraged and comforted in the prospect of it: And they should value the scriptures, that are so much written for their consolation and salvation. 2. For their confirmation and progress in their holy faith. *And that he may believe on the name of the Son of God*, ver. 13. i. e. may go on believing. Believers must persevere or they do nothing. To withdraw from believing on the name of the Son of God, is to renounce eternal life and to draw back unto perdition. And therefore the evidences of religion and the advantage of faith, are to be presented to believers in order to hearten and encourage them to persevere to the end.

14. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. 15. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. 16. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin unto death: There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. 17. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Here we see, 1. A privilege belonging to faith in Christ; and that is audience in prayer. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us*, ver. 14. The Lord Christ emboldens us to come to God in all circumstances, with all our supplications and requests. And through him our petitions are admitted and accepted of God. The matter of our prayer must be agreeable to the declared will of God. It is not fit that we should ask what is contrary either to his majesty and glory or to our own good, who are his and dependant on him. And then we may have confidence that the prayer of faith shall be heard in heaven.

2. The advantage accruing to us by such privilege. *And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*, ver. 15. Great are the deliverances, mercies and blessings the holy petitioner needs. To know that his petitions are heard or accepted, is as good as to know that they are answered; and therefore that he is so pitied, pardoned, counselled, sanctified, assisted and saved (or shall be so) as he is allowed to ask of God.

3. Direction in prayer in reference to the sins of others, *If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death: There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it*, ver. 16. Where we may observe, 1. That we ought to pray for others as well as for ourselves; for our brethren of mankind, that they may be enlightened, converted and saved; for our brethren in the Christian profession; that they may be sincere, and may be pardoned their sins, delivered from evils and the chastisements of God, and preserved in Christ Jesus. 2. That there is a great distinction in the heinousness and guilt of sin. *There is a sin unto death*, ver. 16. *and there is a sin not unto death*, ver. 17. 1. *There is a sin unto death*. All sin as to the merit and legal sentence of it is unto death. *The wages of sin is death; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. But there is a sin unto death in opposition to such sin as is here said not to be unto death. There is therefore, 2. A sin not unto death. And that surely must be all such sin as by divine or human constitution may consist with life; in the human constitution with temporal or corporal life; in the divine constitution with corporal or with spiritual evangelical life. 1. There are sins that by human righteous constitution are not unto death; as divers pieces of injustice which may be compensated without the death of the delinquent. In opposition to which there are sins, that by righteous constitution are to death or to a legal forfeiture of life. Such as we call capital crimes. Then there are sins that by divine constitution are unto death; and that either death corporal or spiritual and evangelical; 1. Such as are or may be to death corporal. And such may the sins be either of gross hypocrites, as Ananias and Sapphira, or for ought we know of sincere Christian brethren; as when the apostle says of the offending members of the church of Corinth; *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*, 1 Cor. xi. 30. There may be sin unto corporal death among those that may not be condemned with the world. Such sin (I said) is or may be to corporal death. The divine, penal constitution in the gospel, does not positively and peremptorily threaten death to the more visible sins of the members of Christ, but only some gospel-chastisement; *for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, Heb. xii. 6. There is room left for divine wisdom or goodness, or even gospel-severity, to determine how far the chastisement or the scourge shall proceed. And we cannot say but that sometimes it may (in *terrorem*, for warning to others) proceed even to death. Then, 2. There are sins that by divine constitution are unto death spiritual and evangelical, that is, are inconsistent with spiritual and evangelical life; with spiritual life in the soul, and with an evangelical right to life above. Such are total impenitence and unbelief for the present; final impenitence and unbelief are infallibly to death eternal; as also a blaspheming of the Spirit of God in the testimony that he has given to Christ and his gospel, and a total apostasy from the light and convictive evidence of the truth of Christian religion. These are sins deriving the guilt of everlasting death. Then comes, 4. The application of the direction for prayer according to the different sorts of sin thus distinguished. The prayer is supposed to be for life. *He shall ask and he (God) shall give them life*. Life is to be asked of God; he is the God of life, and gives it when and

to whom he pleases, and takes it away, either by his constitution or providence, or both, as he thinks meet. In case of a brother's sin, that is not (in the manner already mentioned) unto death, as we may in faith and hope pray for him; and particularly for the life of soul and body. But in case of the sin unto death in the forementioned ways, we have no allowance to pray. Perhaps the apostle's expression, *I do not say he shall pray for it*, may intend no more than I have no promise for you in that case: no foundation for the prayer of faith. 1. The laws of punitive justice may be executed for the common safety and benefit of mankind. And even an offending brother in such a case must be resigned to public justice (which in the foundation of it is divine) and at the same time also to the mercy of God. 2. The removal of evangelical penalties (as they may be called) or the prevention of death (that may seem to be so consequential upon or inflicted for some particular sin) can be prayed for only conditionally or provisionally, i. e. with proviso that it consist with the wisdom will and glory of God that they should be removed; and particularly such death prevented. 3. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that any mercy of life or soul, that supposes the forgiveness of sin, should be granted to them while they continue such. But we may pray for their repentance (supposing them but in the common case of the impenitent world) and for their being enriched with faith in Christ; and thereupon for all other saving mercies. 4. In case it should appear that any have committed the irremissible blasphemy against the holy Ghost, and the total apostasy from the illuminating convictive powers of the Christian religion, it should seem that they are not to be prayed for at all. For, *what remains but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, to consume such adversaries?* Heb. x. 27. And these last seem to be sins chiefly intended by the apostle by the names of sins unto death, thus, *All unrighteousness is sin*, ver. 17. but were all unrighteousness unto death (since we have all some unrighteousness towards God or man or both, in omitting and neglecting something that is their due) then we were all peremptorily bound over to death: But since it is not so, the Christian brethren generally speaking having right to life, there must be sin that is not to death. Though there is not venial sin, in the common acceptation, there is pardoned sin; sin that does not derive a plenary obligation to eternal death. If it were not so, there could be no justification or continuance of the justified state. The gospel-constitution or covenant abbreviates, abridges or rescinds the guilt of sin.

18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. 20. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Here we have, (1.) A recapitulation of the privileges and advantages of the sound Christian believers: 1. They are secured against sin, against the fulness of its dominion or the fulness of its guilt: *We know that whosoever is born of God, and the believer in Christ is born of God*, ver. 1. *sinneth not*; ver. 18. *sinneth not* with that fulness of heart and spirit as the unregenerate do, as was said chap. iii. 6, 9. and consequently not with that fulness of guilt that attends the sins of others; and so he is secured against that sin that is unavoidably unto death, or that infallibly binds the sinner over unto the wages of eternal death; the new nature, and the inhabitation of the divine Spirit thereby, prevents the admission of such unpardonable sin. 2. They are fortified against the devil's destructive attempts. *He that is begotten of God, keepeth himself*, i. e. is enabled to guard himself, *and the wicked one toucheth him not*, ver. 18. i. e. that the wicked one may not touch him, viz. to death. It seems not to be barely a narration of the duty or the practice of the regenerate; but an indication of their power by virtue of their regeneration; they are thereby prepared and principled against the fatal touches, i. e. the sting of the wicked one; he touches not their souls to infuse that venom there that he does to others, or to expel that regenerative principle that is an antidote to his poison, or to induce them to that sin that by gospel constitution conveys an indissoluble obligation to eternal death; he may prevail too far with them to draw them to some acts of sin; but it seems to be the design of the apostle to assert, that their regeneration secures them from such assaults of the devil as will bring them into the same case and actual condemnation with the devil.

3. They are on God's side and interest, in opposition to the state of the world: *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*, ver. 19. Mankind is divided into two great parties or dominions, that that belongs to God, and that that belongs to wickedness, or to the wicked one: The Christian believers belong to God, they are of God, and from him, and to him, and for him; they succeed into the right and room of the ancient Israel of God, of whom it is said, *The Lord's people is his portion*, his estate in this world; *Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*, the dividend that is fallen to him by the lot of his own determination, *Deut. xxxii. 9*. while on the contrary, *the whole world*, the rest, being by far the major part, *lieth in wickedness*, in the jaws, in the bowels of the wicked one: There are indeed, were we to consider the individuals, many wicked ones, many wicked spirits in the heavenly or the ethereal places, but they are united in wicked nature, policy and principle; and they are united also in one head; there is the prince of the devils and of the diabolical kingdom: there is a head of the malignity and of the malignant world; and he has such sway here, that he is called *the God of this world*: Strange, that such a knowing spirit should be so implacably incensed against the Almighty and all his interests, when he cannot but know that it must end in his own overthrow and everlasting damnation: How tremendous is the judgment of God upon the wicked one! May the God of the Christian world continually demolish his dominion in this world, and translate souls into the kingdom of his dear Son!

4. They are enlightened in the knowledge of the true eternal God; *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true*, ver. 20. The Son of God is come into our world, and we have seen him, and know him by all the evidence that has already been asserted; and he hath revealed unto us the true God, as *John i. 18*. and he hath opened our minds too to understanding that revelation; given us an internal light in our understandings, whereby we may discern the glories of the true God; and we are assured that it is the true God that he hath discovered to us; he is infinitely transcendent in purity,

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city, power and perfection, to all the gods of the Gentiles; he has all the excellencies, beauties and riches of the living and true God; it is the same God that, according to Moses's account, made the heavens and the earth; the same that took our fathers the patriarchs into peculiar covenant with himself; the same that brought our ancestors out of Egypt, that gave us the fiery law upon mount Sinai; that gave us his holy oracles, and promised the call and conversion of the Gentiles; by his counsels and works, by his love and grace; by his terrors and judgments, we know that he, and he alone, in the fulness of his being, is the living and true God: It is a great happiness to know the true God, to know him in Christ it is eternal life, John xvii. 3. It is the glory of the Christian revelation, that it gives the best account of the true God, and administers the best eye-salves for our discerning the living and true God.

5. They have an happy union with God and his Son: *And we are in him that is true, even (or and) in his Son Jesus Christ*, ver. 20. The Son leads us to the Father, and we are in both; in the love and favour of both; in covenant and federal alliance with both; in spiritual conjunction with both by the inhabitation and operation of their Spirit; and that you may know how great a dignity and felicity this is, you must remember, that this true one is the true God and eternal life; or rather, as it should seem a more natural construction, this same Son of God is himself also the true

God of eternal life, John i. 1. and here, chap. i. 2: so that in union with either, much more with both, we are united to the true God and eternal life: Then we have,

(2.) The apostle's concluding monition: *Little children* (dear children; as it has been interpreted) *keep yourselves from idols*, ver. 21. Since ye know the true God and are in him, let your light and love guard you against all that is advanced in opposition to him or competition with him; flee from the false gods of the heathen world; they are not comparable to the God whose you are and whom you serve; adore not your God by statues and images which share in his worship; your God is an incomprehensible Spirit, and is disgraced by such sordid representations; hold no communion with your heathen neighbours in their idolatrous worship, your God is jealous, and would have you come out and be separated from among them; mortify the flesh and be crucified to the world, that they may not usurp the throne and dominion in the heart, which is due only to God; the God whom you have known, is he that made you, that redeemed you by his Son, that has sent his gospel to you, that hath pardoned your sins, and begotten you unto himself by his Spirit, and given you eternal life; cleave to him in faith, and love, and constant obedience, in opposition to all things (brethren) that would alienate your mind and heart from God. To this living and true God be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THE END OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

By M. A. Rynders.

Here we find a canonical epistle inscribed (principally) not only to a single person, but to one also of the softer sex: And why not to one of that sex? In gospel redemption privilege and dignity, *there is neither male nor female*, they are both one in Christ Jesus; our Lord himself neglected his own repast to commune with the woman of Samaria, in order to shew her the fountain of life; and when almost expiring upon the cross, he would with his dying lips bequeath his blessed mother to the care of his beloved disciple, and thereby instruct him to respect female disciples for the future: It was to one of the same sex that our Lord chose to appear first after his return from the grave, and to send by her the news of his resurrection to this as well as to the other apostles: And we find afterward a zealous Priscilla, so well acquitting herself in her Christian race, and particularly in some hazardous service towards the apostle Paul, that she is not only often mentioned before her husband, but to her as well as to him, not only the apostle himself but also all the Gentile churches were read to return their thankful acknowledgments: No wonder then that an heroine in Christian religion, honoured by divine providence, and distinguished by divine grace, should be dignified also by an apostolical epistle.

The apostle here salutes an honourable matron and her children, ver. 1—3. Recommends to them faith and love, ver. 5, 6. Warns them of deceivers, ver. 7. and to take heed to themselves, ver. 8. Teaches how to treat those that bring not the doctrine of Christ, ver. 10, 11. And referring other things to personal discourse, concludes the epistle, ver. 12, 13.

THE elder unto the elect lady, and her children, whom I love in the truth: And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth: 2. For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

Ancient epistles began, as here, with salutation and good wishes; religion consecrates, as far as may be, old forms, and turns compliments into real expressions of life and love: Here we have, as usually,

1. The saluter; not expressed by name, but by a chosen character: *The elder*. The expression, and title, and love, do intimate that the penman was the same with that of the foregoing epistle; he is now the elder, emphatically and eminently so; possibly the oldest apostle now living; the chief elder in the church of God. An elder in the ancient house of Israel was revered, or to be revered; much more he that is so in the gospel Israel of God: An old disciple is honourable, an old apostle and leader of disciples is more so: He was now old in holy service and experience, had seen and tasted much of heaven, and was much nearer than when at first he believed.

2. The saluted; a noble Christian matron and her children: *To the elect lady, and her children*. A lady, a person of eminent quality for birth, breeding or estate; it is well the gospel has got among such; it is pity but lords and ladies should be acquainted with the Lord Christ and his religion; they owe more to him than others do; though usually not many noble are called: Here is a pattern for persons of quality of the same sex; the elect lady; not only a choice one, but one chosen of God; it is brave to see divine election running among the ladies; it is lovely and beautiful to see ladies, by holy walking, demonstrate their election of God: *And her children*; probably the lady was a widow, she and her children then are the principal part of the family, and so this may be stiled an oeconomic epistle; families may well be wrote to and encouraged, and further directed in their domestic love and order and duties; we see that children may well be taken notice of in Christian letters, and they should know it too, it may avail to their encouragement and caution, they that love and commend them will be apt

to enquire after them; this lady and her children are further notified by the respect paid them, and that, 1. By the apostle himself; *whom I love in the truth*, or in truth; whom I sincerely and heartily love; he that was the beloved disciple had learnt the art or exercise of love; and he especially loved those that loved him, that Lord that loved him. 2. By all her Christian acquaintance, all the religious that knew her; *and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth*; virtue and goodness in an elevated sphere shine bright; truth demands acknowledgment; they that see the evidences of pure religion, should confess and attest them; it is a good sign and great duty to love and value religion in others. Then here is the ground of this love and respect thus paid to this lady, *and her children, for the truth's sake* (or true religion's sake) *which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever*: Christian love is founded upon the appearance of Christian vital religion; likenesses should beget affection; they that love truth and piety in themselves should love it in others too; or love others upon the account of it; the apostle and the other Christians loved this lady, not so much for her honour as her holiness; not so much for her bounty as her serious Christianity: We should not be religious merely by fits and starts, in certain moods and moous, but religion should still dwell within us, in our minds and hearts, in our faith and love: It is to be hoped that where religion once truly dwells it will abide for ever: The Spirit of Christianity, we may suppose, will not be totally extinguished: *Which shall be with us for ever*.

3. Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4. I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

Here we see, 1. The salutation, which is indeed an apostolical benediction: *Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love*. Sacred love pours out blessings upon this honourable Christian family; to them that have more shall be given; these blessings are craved, (1.) *From God the Father*, the God of all grace, he is the fountain of blessedness, and of all the blessings that must bring us thither. (2.) *From the Lord Jesus Christ*, he is also author and communicator of these heavenly blessings, and he is distinguished by this emphatical character, *the Son of the Father*; such a Son as none else can be; such a Son as is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; who, with the Father, is also eternal life, 1 John i. 2. from

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from these divine persons is craved, 1. *Grace*; divine favour and good-will, the spring of all good things; it is *grace* indeed that any spiritual blessings should be conferred on sinful mortals. 2. *Mercy*; free pardon and forgiveness; they that are already rich in *grace* have need of continual forgiveness. 3. *Peace*; tranquillity of spirit of serenity of conscience, in an assured reconciliation with God, together with all safe and sanctified outward prosperity; and these are desired in *truth and love*; either by sincere and ardent affection in the saluter, in faith and love he prays them *From God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*, or as a productive of continued *truth and love* in the saluted, these blessings will continually preserve true faith and love in the *elect lady, and her children*; and may they do so!

2. The congratulation upon the prospect of the exemplary conversation of other children of this excellent lady: Happy parent! that was blessed with such a numerous religious offspring! *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth, as we have received commandment from the Father.* Possibly the lady's sons travelled abroad, either for accomplishment and acquaintance with the world, or on account of their own business or the common affairs of the family, and in their travels might come to Ephesus, where the apostle is now supposed to reside, and might there happily converse with him. See how good it is to be trained up to early religion! though religion is not to be founded upon education, yet education may be and often is blessed; and is the way to fortify youth against irreligious infection: And hence let young travellers learn to carry their religion along with them, and not either leave it at home, or learn the ill customs of the countries where they come: It may be observed also, that sometimes election runs in a direct line; here is an *elect lady, and her elect children*; children may be beloved for their parent's sake; but both by virtue of free *grace*: From the apostle's joy herein we may observe, that it is pleasant to see children treading in good parents' steps; and they that see this may well congratulate their parents thereupon, and that both to excite their thankfulness to God for, and to enlarge their comfort in so great a blessing: How happy a lady was this, that had brought forth so many children for heaven and for God! And how great a joy must it be to her ladyship to hear so good an account of them from so good a judge! And we may further see that it is joyful to good old ministers, and accordingly to other good old disciples, to see a hopeful rising generation, that may serve God and support religion in the world when they are dead and gone: We see here also the rule of our walking; *the commandment of the Father*: Then is our walk true, our converse right, when it is managed by the word of God.

5. And now, I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

We come now more into the design and substance of the epistle; and here we have, 1. The apostle's request: *Now, I beseech thee, lady.* Considering what it is that he intreats, the way of address is very remarkable; it is not any particular boon or bounty to himself, but common duty and observance of divine command; here he might command or charge; but harsher methods are worse than needless, where milder will prevail; and the apostolical spirit is, of all other, the most tender and endearing: Whether out of deference to her ladyship, or apostolical meekness, or both, he condescends to beseech: *And now, I beseech thee, lady*: He may be supposed speaking as another apostle does to a certain master to whom he writes: *Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ* (and according to the power with which Christ hath intrusted me) *to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet, for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such a one as the aged, the elder.* Love will avail where authority will not; and we may often see, that the more authority is urged the more it is slighted: The apostolical minister will love and beseech his friends into their duty.

2. The thing requested of the lady, and her children; Christian sacred love; *that we love one another*, ver. 5. They that are eminent in any Christian virtue, have yet room to grow therein. *But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another: But we beseech you, brethren (and sisters) that ye increase more and more,* 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10. This love is, (1.) Recommended, 1. From the obligation thereto: *The commandment.* Divine command should sway our mind and heart. 2. From the antiquity of the obligation: *Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning*, ver. 5. This commandment of mutual Christian love may be said to be a new one, in respect of its new enactment and sanction by the Lord Christ; but yet, as to the matter of it (mutual holy love) it is as old as natural, Jewish, or Christian religion; this commandment must every where attend Christianity, that the disciples of it must *love one another*. Then this love is, (2.) Illustrated from the fruitful nature of it: *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments*, ver. 6. This is the test of our love to God, our obedience to him: *This is love to ourselves*, to our own souls, that we walk in obedience to divine commands: *In keeping them there is great reward.* *This is love to one another*, to engage one another to walk in holiness; and this is the note of our sincere, mutual, Christian love, that we (in other things) walk after God's commands: There may be mutual love that is not religious and Christian; but we know ours to be so, by our attendance to all other commands besides that of mutual love; universal obedience is the proof of the goodness and sincerity of Christian virtues, and they that aim at all Christian obedience, will be sure to attend to Christian love; that is a fundamental duty in the gospel charter: *This is the commandment, that as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it*, ver. 6. *i. e.* walk in this love: The foresight of the decay of this love, as well as of other apostasy, might engage the apostle to inculcate this duty, and this primordial command, the more frequently, the more earnestly.

7. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist. 8. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

In this principal part of the epistle we find, 1. The ill news communicated to the lady; seducers are abroad: *For many deceivers are entered into*

the world. This report is introduced by a particle that bespeaks a reason of the report: ye have need to maintain your love, *for* there are destroyers of it in the world; they that subvert the faith destroy the love; the common faith is one ground of the common love; or you must secure your walk according to the commands of God, that will secure you; your stability is like to be tried, *for many deceivers are entered into the world*; sad and saddening news may be communicated to our Christian friends; not that we should love to make them sorry; but to forewarn is the way to forearm them against their trials: Now here is, 1. The description of the deceiver and his deceit; he *confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*, ver. 7. he brings some error or other concerning the person of the Lord Jesus; he either *confesses not that Jesus Christ* is the same person, or that *Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Anointed of God, the Messiah* promised of old for the redemption of Israel, or that the promised Messiah and Redeemer is come in the flesh, or into the flesh; into our world and into our nature; such a one pretends that he is yet to be expected: Strange, that after such evidence any should deny that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the world! 2. The aggravation of the case; such a one is a *deceiver and an antichrist*, ver. 7. he deludes souls, and undermines the glory and kingdom of the Lord Christ; he must be an impostor, a wilful deceiver, after all the light that has been afforded, and all the evidence that Christ hath given concerning himself, and the attestation God hath given concerning his Son; and he is a wilful opposer of the person and honour and interest of the Lord Christ, and as such shall be reckoned with when the Lord Christ comes again; let us not think it strange there are *deceivers* and opposers of the Lord Christ's name and dignity now, there were such of old, even in the apostles times.

2. The counsel given to this elect household hereupon. Now care and caution is needful; *Look to yourselves*, ver. 8. The more *deceivers* and deceits do abound, the more watchful the disciples must be: Delusions may so prevail as that even the elect may be endangered thereby: Two things they must beware of: 1. *That they lose not what they had wrought*, ver. 8. *i. e.* what they have done, or what they have gained; it is pity that any religious labour should be in vain; some begin well, but at last lose all their pains; the hopeful Gentleman, that had kept the commands of the second table from his youth up, lost all for want of less love to the world and more love to Christ: nor what they have gained; many have not only gained a fair reputation for religion, but much light therein, much conviction of the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the excellency of religion, and the power of God's word; they have even *tasted of the powers of the world to come*, and the gifts of the holy spirit, and yet at last lose all: *Ye did run well, who hindered ye, that ye should not obey* (or not go on to obey) *the truth*? Sad it is, that fair splendid attainments in the school of Christ should all be lost at last. 2. That they lose not their reward, none of it, no portion of that honour, or praise, or glory, that they once stood fair for; that we (or ye, as in some copies) *receive a full reward*; secure ye as full a reward as will be given to any in the church of God; if there are degrees of glory, lose none of that grace (that light, or love, or peace) that is to prepare you for the higher elevation in glory; *hold fast that which thou hast* (in faith and hope and a good conscience) *that no man take thy crown*; that thou neither lose it, nor any jewel out of it, Rev. iii. 11. The way to attain the full reward, is to abide true to Christ, and constant in religion to the end.

3. The reason of the apostle's counsel, and of their care and caution about themselves, which is two-fold: 1. The danger and evil of departure from gospel light and revelation; it is in effect and reality a departure from God himself: *Whosoever transgresseth* (transgresseth at this dismal rate) *and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God*: It is the doctrine of Christ that is appointed to guide us to God; it is that whereby God draws souls to salvation and to himself; they that revolt from thence, in so doing revolt from God. 2. The advantage and happiness of firm adherence to Christian truth; it unites us to Christ (the object or subject matter of that truth) and thereby to the Father also; for they are one: *He that abideth* (rooted and grounded) *in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.* By the doctrine of Christ we are enlightened in the knowledge of the Father and the Son; by it we are sanctified for the Father and the Son; and thereupon are enriched with holy love to the Father and the Son; and thereby prepared for the endless enjoyment of the Father and the Son. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you, John xv. 3. That purity makes meet for heaven: The great God, as he has set his seal to, so he puts a value upon the doctrine of Christ: We must retain that holy doctrine in faith and love, as we hope or desire to arrive at blessed communion with the Father and the Son.

10. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. 11. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.

Upon due warning given concerning seducers, the apostle gives direction concerning the treatment of such; they are not to be entertained as the ministers of Christ; the Lord Christ will distinguish them from such, and so would he have his disciples: The direction is negative: 1. Support them not: *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine* (concerning Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah and Anointed of God, for our redemption and salvation), *receive him not into your house*. Possibly this lady was like Gaius, whom we read of in the next epistle, a generous house-keeper, and hospitable entertainer of travelling ministers and Christians: These *deceivers* might possibly expect the same reception with others, or with the best that came there, as the blind are often bold enough, but the apostle allows it not; do not welcome them into your family; doubtless such may be relieved in their pressing necessities; but not encouraged for ill service: But deniers of the faith are destroyers of souls; and it is supposed that even ladies themselves should have good understanding in the affairs of religion. 2. Bless not their enterprises: *Neither bid him God speed*: Attend not their service with your prayers and good wishes: Ill work should not be consecrated or recommended to the divine benediction; God will be no patron of falsehood, seduction, and sin: We ought to *bid God speed* to evangelical ministration; but the propagation of fatal error, if we cannot prevent, we must not dare to countenance. Then,

2. Here is the reason of such direction, forbidding the support and patronage of the deceiver: *For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds*. Favour and affection partake of the sin. We may be sharers in the iniquities of others. How judicious and how cautious should the Christian be! There are many ways of sharing the guilt of other folks' transgressions; it may be done by culpable silence, indolence, unconcernedness, private contribution, public countenance and assistance, inward approbation, open apology and defence. The Lord pardon our guilt of other persons' sins!

12. Having

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12. Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.
13. The children of thy elect sister greet thee.

The apostle concludes this letter, 1. With an adjournment of many things to personal conference: *Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink, but I trust to come unto you and speak face to face that our joy may be full.* Where it is supposed that some things are better spoken than wrote: a pen and ink may be a mercy and a pleasure; but a personal interview may be more so; the apostle was not yet too old for travel, nor consequently for travelling service: the communion of saints should be by all methods maintained: Their communion should

tend to their mutual joy: Excellent ministers may have their joy advanced by their Christian friends: *That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me,* Rom. i. 12.

2. With the presentation of service and salutation from some near relations to the lady: *The children of thy elect sister greet thee.* Grace was abundant towards this family: Here are two elect sisters, and probably their elect children. How will they admire this grace in heaven! The apostle condescends to insert the nieces duty (as we would call it) or dutiful salutation to their aunt. The duty of inferior relations is to be cherished: doubtless the apostle was enly of access, and would admit all friendly and pious communication, and was ready to enhance the good lady's joy in her nieces as well as her children. May there be many such gracious ladies rejoicing in their gracious descendants and other relations! Amen.

THE END OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE THIRD EPISTLE OF

J O H N.

By M. A. ...

Christian communion is exerted and cherished by letter: Christians are to be commended in the practical proof of their professed subjection to the gospel of Christ: The animating and countenancing of generous and public-spirited persons, is doing good to many: To this end the apostle sends this encouraging epistle to his friend Gaius, in which also he complains of the quite opposite spirit and practice of a certain minister, and confirms the good report concerning another more worthy to be imitated.

In this epistle the apostle congratulates Gaius upon the prosperity of his soul, ver. 1, 2. Upon the fame he had among good Christians, ver. 3, 4. Upon his charity and hospitality to the servants of Christ, ver. 5, 6. He complains of contemptuous treatment by an ambitious Diotrephes, ver. 9, 10. Recommends Demetrius, ver. 12. and hopes to visit Gaius shortly, ver. 13, 14.

1. **T**HE elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. 2. Beloved, I wish above all things, that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Here we see, 1. The sacred penman that writes and sends the letter; not here indeed notified by his name, but a more general character, *The elder.* He that is so by years and by office, honour and deference is due to both. Some have questioned whether this were John the apostle or no: but his stile and spirit seem to shine therein; they that are beloved of Christ, will love the brethren for his sake: Gaius could not question from whom the letter came. The apostle might have assumed many more illustrious characters, but it becomes not Christ's ministers to affect swelling pompous titles. He almost levels himself with the more ordinary pastors of the church, while he styles himself *The elder*: or possibly, most of the extraordinary ministers the apostles, were now dead, and this holy survivor would countenance the continued standing ministry, by assuming the more common title, *The elder*: *The elders I exhort, who am also an elder,* 1 Pet. v. 1.

2. The person saluted and honoured by the letter; the former was directed to an elect lady, this to a choice gentleman; such are worthy of esteem and value; he is notified, 1. By his name *Gaius*. We read of several of that name, particularly of one whom the apostle Paul baptized at Corinth, who possibly might also be the apostle's host and kind entertainer there, Rom. xvi. 23. if this be not he, it is his brother in name, estate, and disposition. Then, 2. By the kind expressions of the apostle to him, *the well beloved, and whom I love in the truth.* Love expressed is wont to kindle love. Here seems to be either the sincerity of the apostle's love, or the religion of it, and then there is both; the sincerity of it, *whom I love in the truth*, whom I truly cordially love; the religion of it, *whom I love in the truth*, i. e. for the truth's sake, as abiding and walking in the truth as it is in Jesus: To love our friends for the truth's sake, is true love, religious gospel love.

3. The salutation or greeting; containing a prayer introduced by an affectionate compellation. *Beloved, thou beloved one in Christ:* The minister that would gain love must shew it himself. Here is, 1. The apostle's good opinion of his friend, that his soul prospered; there is such a thing as soul prosperity, the greatest blessing on this side of heaven; this supposeth regeneration, and an inward fund of spiritual life; this stock is increasing, and while spiritual treasures are advancing, the soul is in a fair way to the kingdom of glory. 2. His good wish for his friend that his body may prosper and be in health as well as his soul; grace and health are two rich companions, grace will improve health, health will employ grace; it frequently falls out that a rich soul is lodged in a crazy body; grace must be exercised in submission to such a dispensation; we may well wish and pray that they that have prosperous souls, may have healthful bodies too, their grace will shine in a larger sphere of activity.

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3. For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 5. Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren, and to strangers; 6. Which have born witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7. Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8. We therefore ought to receive such that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

In these verses we have, The good report that the apostle had received concerning this friend of his: *The brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee,* ver. 3. which have born witness of thy charity before the church, ver. 6. Where we may see, 1. The testimony or thing testified concerning Gaius, *the truth that was in him*; the reality of his faith, the sincerity of his religion, and devotedness to God, and this evinced by his charity, which includes his love to the brethren, kindness to the poor, hospitality to Christian strangers, and readiness to accommodate them for the service of the gospel; *faith should work by love*, it gives a lustre in and by the offices of love, and induces others to commend its integrity. 2. The witnesses, *brethren that came from Gaius testified and bore witness*, a good report is due from those that have received good, though a good name is but a small reward for costly service, yet it is better than precious ointment, and will not be refused by the ingenious and religious. 3. The auditory or judicatory before which the report and testimony was given, *before the church*, this seems to be the church at which the apostle now resided, what church that was we are not sure, what occasion they had thus to testify his faith and love before the church we cannot tell, possibly out of the fulness of the heart the mouth spake, they could not but testify what they found and felt; possibly they would engage the church's prayer for the continual life and usefulness of such a patron, that he might prosper and be in health as his soul prospered.

2. The report the apostle himself gives of him, introduced by an endearing appellation again; *Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren and to strangers,* ver. 5. 1. He was hospitable, good to the brethren, even to strangers; it was enough to recommend them to Gaius's house, that they belonged to Christ, or he was good to the brethren of the same church with himself, and to those that came from far, all of the household of faith were welcome to him. 2. He seems to be of a catholic spirit; he could overlook the petty differences among serious Christians, and be communicative to all that bore the image and did the work of Christ. And, 3. He was conscientious in what he did, *thou dost faithfully* (thou makest faithful work of) *whatsoever thou dost: thou dost it as a faithful servant*, and from the Lord Christ mayest thou expect the reward of the inheritance: such faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up; the commendation of what is good in us, is designed not for our pride, but for our encouragement to continue therein, and should be accordingly improved.

3. The apostle's joy therein, in the good report itself, and the good ground of it, *I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified, &c.* ver.

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3. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth*, i. e. in the precepts of Christian religion: The best evidence of our having the truth, is our *walking in the truth*: Good men will greatly rejoice in the soul-prosperity of others; and they are glad to hear of the grace and goodness of others, *and they glorified God in me*: Love envieth not, but rejoiceth in the good name of other folks; As it is joy to good parents, it will be joy to good ministers to see their children evidence their truth in religion and adorn their profession.

4. The direction the apostle gives his friend concerning further treatment of brethren that were with him: *Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well*. It seemed customary in those days of love to attend travelling ministers and Christians, at least some part of their road, 1 Cor. xvi. 6. It is a kindness to a stranger to be guided in his way, a pleasure to travellers to meet with suitable company; this is a work that may be done after a godly sort, in a manner worthy of God, i. e. suitable to the deference and relation we bear to God; Christians should consider not only what they must do, but what they may do, what they may most honourably and laudably do; *the liberal mind deviseth liberal generous things*. Then Christians should do even the common actions of life and of good will, after a godly sort, as serving God therein and delighting his glory. Then;

5. The reasons of this directed conduct, these are two; 1. *Because that for his name's sake these brethren went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles*. It appears thus that these were ministerial brethren, that they went forth to preach the gospel and propagate Christianity: possibly they might be sent out by this apostle himself; they *went forth* to convert the *Gentiles*; this was excellent service, *they went forth for God and his name's sake*; this is the minister's highest end, and should be his principal spring and motive to gather and build up a people *for his name*; they *went forth* also to carry a free gospel about with them, to make it unchargeable where they came; taking nothing of the *Gentiles*: these were worthy of double honour: There are those that are not called to preach the gospel themselves, that yet may much contribute to the progress of it; the gospel should be made without charge to those to whom it is first preached, they that know it not cannot be expected to value it; the churches and Christian patriots ought to concur to support the propagation of holy religion in the pagan countries, public spirits should concur according to their several capacities; they that are freely communicative of Christ's gospel should be assisted by those that are communicative of their purses. 2. *We ought therefore to receive such, that we may be fellow helpers to the truth*, i. e. to true religion. The institution of Christ is the true religion, it has been attested of God; they that are true in it, and true to it will earnestly desire and pray for and contribute to its propagation in the world; many ways may the truth be befriended and assisted; they that cannot themselves proclaim it may receive, accompany, help and countenance those that do.

9. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. 10. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 12. Beloved follow not that which is evil but that which is good. He that doth good is of God: but he that doth evil hath not seen God.

1. Here is a very different example and character. An officer; a minister in the church, less generous, catholic, and communicative than the private Christians. Ministers may sometimes be out-shone, out-done. In reference to this minister we see, 1. His name: a Gentile name, *Diotrephes*, attended with an unchristian spirit. 2. His temper and spirit: Full of pride and ambition. *He loves to have the pre-eminence*. This ferment sprung and wrought betimes. It is an ill unbeseeming character of Christ's ministers, to love pre-eminence; to affect presidency and precedency in the church of God. 3. His contempt of the apostle's authority and letter and friends. Of his authority. The deeds which he doth contrary to our appointment, *prating against us with malicious words*. Strange, that the contempt should run so high! But ambition will breed malice against those that oppose it. Malice and ill will in the heart will be apt to vent itself by the lips. The heart and mouth are both to be watched. Of this letter. *I wrote to the church*, ver. 9. viz. in recommendation of such and such brethren. But *Diotrephes receiveth us not*; admits not our letter and testimony therein. This seems to be the church of which Gaius was a member. A gospel church seems to be such a society as to which a letter may be written and communicated. Gospel churches may well expect and be allowed credentials with the strangers that desire to be admitted among them. The apostle seems to write by and with these brethren. To an ambitious aspir-

ing spirit, apostolical authority or epistle signifies but little. Of his thrusting the brethren he recommended; *Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would; and casteth them out of the church*, ver. 10. There might be some differences or different customs between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians. Pastors should seriously consider what differences are tolerable. The pastor is not at absolute liberty, nor Lord over God's heritage. It is bad to do no good ourselves; but it is worse to hinder those that would. Church-power and church-censures are often abused: Many are cast out of the church that should be received there with satisfaction and welcome. But woe to those that cast out the brethren whom the Lord Christ will take into his own communion and kingdom! 4. The apostle's menace of this proud domineerer; *Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth*, ver. 10. will remember to censure them: This seems to intimate apostolical authority. But the apostle seems not to hold an episcopal court, to which Diotrephes must be summoned; but will come to take cognizance in this affair in the church to which it belongs. Acts of ecclesiastical domination and tyranny ought to be unimadverted upon. May it be better agreed to whom that power belongs!

Here is counsel upon that different character, dissuasion from copying such a pattern, and indeed any evil at all: *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good*, ver. 11. Imitate not such ecclesiastical, unchristian, pernicious evil; but pursue the contrary good in wisdom, purity, peace and love. Caution and counsel is not needless to those that are good already. Those cautions and counsels are most like to be accepted, that are seasoned with love. *Beloved, follow not that which is evil*; to this caution and counsel a reason is respectively subjoined. 1. To the counsel, *Follow that which is good*. For, *he that doth good* (naturally and genuinely doth good as delighting therein) *is of God*, i. e. is born of God. The practice of goodness is the evidence of our filial happy relation to God. 2. To the caution: *Follow not that which is evil*. *He that doth evil* (with bent of mind pursues it) *hath not seen God*, is not duly sensible of his holy nature and will. Evil workers vainly pretend to boast an acquaintance with God.

12. Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record, and ye know that our record is true. 13. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: 14. But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name:

Here we see, 1. The character of another person, one Demetrius; not much known otherwise. But here his name will live. A name in the gospel, a name in the churches, is better than that of sons and daughters. His character was his commendation. His commendation was, 1. General: *Demetrius has a good report of all men*. Few are well spoken of by all: And sometimes it is ill to be so. But universal integrity and goodness is the way to (and sometimes obtains) the universal applause. 2. Deserved and well founded. *And of the truth itself*, ver. 12. Some have a good report, but not of the truth itself. Happy they whose spirit and conduct commend them before God and men. 3. Confirmed by the apostle's and his friends testimony. *Yea, and we also bear record*: and that with an appeal to Gaius's own knowledge: *And ye (you and your friends) know that our record is true*. Probably this Demetrius was known to the church where the apostle now resided; and to that where Gaius was. It is good to be well known of known for good. We must be ready to bear our testimony to those that are good: It is a debt to virtue and goodness. It is well for those that are commended, when those that commend them can appeal to the consciences of those that know them most.

2. The conclusion of the epistle, in which we may observe, 1. The referring of some things to personal interview. *I have many things to write; but I will not with ink and pen, but I trust I shall shortly see thee*, ver. 13; 14. Many things may be more proper for immediate communication, than for letter. A little personal conference may spare the time, trouble and charge of many letters; and good Christians may well be glad to see one another. 2. The benediction, *Peace be to you*, i. e. all felicity attend you: They that are good and happy themselves, wish others so too. 3. The public salutation sent to Gaius. *Our friends salute thee*. A friend to the propagation of religion deserves a common remembrance. And these pious persons shew their friendship to religion as well as to Gaius: 4. The apostle's particular salutation of the Christians in Gaius's church of vicinity: *Greet the friends by name*. I doubt they were not very many; that must be so personally saluted. But we must learn humility as well as love. The lowest in the church of Christ should be greeted. And they may well salute and greet one another on earth, that hope to live together in heaven. And the apostle that had lain in Christ's bosom, lays Christ's friends in his heart.

THE END OF THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
OF THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF

J U D E.

By M. T. Bellingham.

This epistle (as some few others are) is stiled general or catholic; for that it is not immediately directed to any particular person, family; or church, but to the whole society of Christians of that time, lately converted to the faith of Christ, whether from Judaism or Paganism. And it is and will be of standing, lasting, and special use in and to the church as long as Christianity, that is, as time, shall last. Some of the chief things contained in it summarily are, 1. An account of the penman of it, a character of the church, the blessings and privileges of that happy society, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. The occasion of writing this epistle, *ver. 3.* 3. A character of evil and perverse men, who were already sprung up in that infant state of the church, and would be succeeded by others of the like evil spirit and temper in after-times, *ver. 4.* 4. Caution against hearkening to and following after such, from the severity of God towards the unbelieving murdering Israelites at their coming out of Egypt, the angels that fell, the instance of Sodom and Gomorrah, their sin and punishment, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* 5. To these the apostle likens the seducers against whom he was warning them, and describes them at large from *ver. 8—13.* inclusive. 6. Then (as specially suitable to his argument) he cites an ancient prophesy of Enoch, foretelling and describing the future judgment, *ver. 14, 15.* 7. Enlargeth on the seducer's character, and guards against the offence which honest minds might be apt to take at the so early permission of such things, by shewing that it was foretold long before, that so it must be, *ver. 16, 17, 18, 19.* 8. Exhorts them to *perseverance in the faith, fervency in prayer, watchfulness against falling from the love of God, and a lively hope of eternal life,* *ver. 20, 21.* 9. Directs them how to carry themselves towards the erroneous and scandalous, *ver. 22, 23.* And 10. Closeth with an admirable doxology in the two last verses.

This epistle (as most of the rest do) consists of, 1. A preface or introduction, *ver. 1, 2.* II. The body of the epistle, from *ver. 3.* to 23 inclusive. III. The conclusion by way of doxology, *ver. 44, 45.*

The general scope of it is much the same with that of the second chapter of the second epistle of Peter, which having been already explained, the less will need to be said on this.

It is designed to warn us against seducers and their seduction, to inspire us with a warm love to, and an hearty concern for truth (evident and important truth) and that in the closest conjunction with holiness, of which charity or sincere unbiassed brotherly love is a most essential character and inseparable branch.

The truth we are to hold fast, and endeavour that others may be acquainted with and not depart from, hath two special characters.

1. *It is the truth as it is in Jesus,* *Lph. iv. 21.*

2. *It is truth after (or which is according to) godliness,* *Tit. i. 1.*

The gospel is the gospel of Christ, he hath revealed it to us, and he is the main subject of it; and therefore we are indispensably bound to learn from thence all we can of his person, natures, and offices; indifference as to this is inexcusable in any who call themselves Christians; and we know from what fountain we are wholly and solely to draw all necessary saving knowledge.

Further, it is also a doctrine of godliness, whatever doctrines favour the corrupt lusts of men cannot be of God, let the pleas and pretensions for them be what they will. Errors dangerous to the souls of men soon sprang up in the church. *The servant slept and tares were sown:* but such was the wisdom and kindness of providence, that they began sensibly to appear and shew themselves, while some at least of the apostles were yet alive to confute them, and to warn others against them. We are apt to think if we had lived in their times we should have been abundantly fenced against the attempts and artifices of seducers, but we have their testimony and their cautions, which is sufficient, and if we will not believe their writings, neither would we have believed or regarded their sayings, if we had lived among them and conversed personally with them.

We come now to consider, 1. The preface or introduction to this epistle, *ver. 1, 2.*

1. **JUDE**, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: 2. Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

Here we have, 1. An account of the penman of this epistle, Jude, or Judas, or Judah. He was namesake to one of his ancestors, the patriarch Jacob, the most eminent though not the first-born of his sons: out of whose loins (lineally in a most direct succession) the Messiah came. This was a name of worth, eminency, and honour, yet, 1. He has a wicked namesake. There was one Judas (one of the twelve) surnamed Iscariot (from the place of his birth) who was a vile traitor, the betrayer of his and our Lord. *The same names may be common to the best and worst persons.* It may be instructive to be called after the names of eminently good men, but there can be no inference drawn thence what we shall prove, though we may even thence conclude what sort of persons our good parents or progenitors desired and hoped we should be. But, 2. Our Judas was quite another man. He was an apostle, so was Iscariot; but he was a sincere disciple and follower of Christ, so was not the other: He was a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, the other was his betrayer and murderer; therefore here, the one is very carefully distinguished from the other. Dr. Manton's note upon this is, that God takes great care of the good name of his sincere and useful servants. Why then should we be prodigal of our own or one another's reputation and usefulness? Our apostle here calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ, esteeming that a most honourable title. It is more honourable to be a sincere and useful servant of Christ, than to be an earthly king, how potent and prosperous soever. He might have claimed kindred to Christ, according to the flesh, but he waves that, and rather glories in being his servant.

Observe, It is really a greater honour to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, than to be a kin to him according to the flesh. Many of Christ's natural kindred, as well as of his progenitors, perished; not from want of natural affection in him as a man, but from infidelity and obstinacy in themselves; which should make the descendants and near relatives of persons most eminent for sincere and exemplary piety, *jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy.* A son of Noah may be saved in the ark from a flood of temporal destruction, and at last be overwhelmed at last in a deluge of divine wrath, and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Christ himself tells us, *that he that heareth his word and doth it, namely, he only, is as his brother and sister, and mother, i. e. more honourably and advantageously related to him than the nearest and dearest of his natural relatives, considered merely as such.* See *Matt. xii. 48, 49, 50.*

Note, further, In that the apostle Jude stiles himself a servant, though an apostle, a dignified officer in Christ's kingdom; that is a greater honour to the meanest sincere ministers (and it holds proportionably as to every up-

right Christian) that he is the servant of Christ Jesus. They were servants before they were apostles, and they were but servants still. Away then with all pretensions in the ministers of Christ to lordly dominion either over one another, or the flocks committed to their charge. Let us ever have that of our dear Redeemer in actual view, *it shall not be so among you,* *Matt. xx. 25, 26.* And brother of James, to wit, of him whom the ancients stile the first bishop of Jerusalem, of whose character and martyrdom Josephus makes mention, and ascribes the horrible destruction of that city and nation to this wicked cruelty, as one of its principal causes*: Of this James our Jude was brother, whether in the strictest or a larger (though very usual) acceptation, I determine not. He however reckons it an honour to him, that he was the brother of such a one. We ought to honour those who are above us in age, gifts, graces, station, not to envy them, yet neither to flatter them, nor be led merely by their example, when we have reason to think they act wrong. Thus the apostle Paul withstood his fellow apostle Peter to the face, notwithstanding the high esteem he had for him, and the affectionate love he bare to him, when he saw that he was to be blamed, *i. e. really blame worthy,* *Gal. ii. 11.* and following verses.

2. We are here acquainted to whom this epistle is directed; namely, to all them who are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. I begin with the last, called, *i. e. called Christians, viz. in the judgment of charity, further than which we cannot, nor in justice ought to go in the judgments or opinions we form or receive of one another; for what appears not, is not, nor ought to come into account in our dealings, with and censures of one another, whatever abatements the divine goodness may seem fit to make for an honest, though a misguided zeal.* The church pretends not (I am sure it ought not) to judge of *secret or hidden things,* or drawn into the light before the time, lest our rash and preposterous zeal do more harm than ever it has done, or I am afraid ever will do good. *The tares and wheat (if Christ may be judge) must grow together till the harvest,* *Matt. xiii. 28, 29, 30.* And then he himself will, by proper instruments, take timely care to separate them. We ought to think the best we can of every man till the contrary appear; nor be forward to receive or propagate, much less invent disadvantageous characters of our brethren. This is the least we can make of the apostle's large and excellent description of charity, *1 Cor. xiii.* and this we ought to make conscience of acting up to, which till we do, the Christian churches will, as alas! they are at this day, be filled with *envying and strife, confusion, and every evil work,* *Jam. iii. 16.* Or, called to be Christians, by the preaching of the word which they gladly receive, and profess cordially to believe, and so are received into the society and fellowship of the church, *viz. Christ the head, and believers the members; real believers really, professed believers visibly.*

Christians are the called, called out of the world, the evil spirit and temper of it; above the world to higher and better things, heaven, &c. things unseen and eternal, called from sin to Christ, from vanity to seriousness from uncleanness to holiness; and this in pursuance of divine purpose and grace;

* See Josephus, Book 20, Chap. 3. and Euseb. Ecc. Hist. B. 2. ch. 22.

GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

grace; for whom he did predestinate, them he also called, Rom. viii. 30. Now they who are thus called are, 1. *Sanctified, sanctified by God the Father.* Sanctification is usually spoken of in scripture as the work of the holy Spirit, yet here it is ascribed to God the Father, because the Spirit works it as the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Note, All who are effectually called, are sanctified; made partakers of a divine nature, 2 Pet. 1; 4. *For without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14.

Observe, Our sanctification is not our own work: If any are sanctified, they are so by God the Father, not excluding Son or Spirit, for they are one, i. e. one God. Our corruption and pollution is of ourselves; but our sanctification and renovation is of God and his grace; and therefore if we perish in our iniquity, we must bear the blame; but if we be sanctified and glorified, all the honour and glory must be ascribed to God, and to him alone. I own it is hard to give a clear and distinct account of this, but we must not deny or disregard necessary truth, because we cannot fully reconcile the several parts of it to each other; for on that supposition, we might deny that any one of us could stir an inch from the place we are at present in, though we see the contrary every day and hour.

2. The called and sanctified are preserved in Christ Jesus. As it is God who begins the work of grace in the souls of men, so it is he who carries it on and perfects it. Where he begins he will perfect; though we are sickle, he is constant; *he will not forsake the work of his own hands,* Psal. cxxxviii. 3. Let us not therefore trust in ourselves, nor in our stock of grace already received, but in him, and in him alone; still endeavouring by all proper and appointed means, to keep ourselves as ever we would hope he should keep us.

Preserved] From the gates of hell, and to the glory of heaven.

Preserved in Christ Jesus.] Observe, All who are preserved, are preserved in Jesus Christ; in him as their citadel and strong hold, no longer than they abide in him and solely by virtue of their union with him.

3. The apostolical benediction, *mercy to you, &c. From the mercy, peace, and love of God all our comfort flows, all our real enjoyment of this life, all our hope of a better.*

1. The mercy of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for. Mercy not only to the miserable, but the guilty.

2. Next to mercy is peace, which we have from the sense of having obtained mercy. We can have no true and lasting peace but what flows from our reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ.

3. As from mercy springs peace, so from peace springs love; *his love to us, our love to him, and our brotherly love,* (forgotten, wretchedly neglected grace!) to one another.

These the apostle prayeth may be multiplied, that Christians may not be content with scraps and narrow scantlings of them; but that souls and societies may be top brim, swimming full of them. Note, God is ready to supply us with all grace, and a fulness in each grace. We are not straitened if we are straitened in him, but in ourselves.

3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation; it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that you should, earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

II. We have here the design of the apostle in writing this epistle to the lately converted Jews and Gentiles, namely, to establish them in the Christian faith, and a practice and conversation truly consonant and conformable thereunto, and in an open and bold profession thereof; especially in times of notorious opposition, whether by artful seduction, or violent and inhuman persecution.

But then we must see to it very carefully that it be really the Christian faith that we believe, profess, propagate, and contend for; not the discriminating badges of this or the other party, not any thing of later date than the inspired writings of the holy evangelists and apostles.

Here observe, 1. That the gospel salvation is a common salvation, i. e. in a most sincere offer and tender of it to all mankind to whom the notice of it reaches: For so the commission runs, *Matt. xvi. 15, 16. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, &c.* Sure God means as he speaks, he doth not delude us with vain words, whatever men do, and therefore none are excluded from the benefit of these gracious offers and invitations, but they who obstinately, impenitently, finally exclude themselves. *Whoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely,* Rev. xxii. 17.

The application of it is made to all believers and only to such; it is made to the weak as well as to the strong; let none discourage themselves on the account of hidden decrees which they can know little of, and with which they have nothing to do. God's decrees are dark, his covenants are plain. "All good Christians meet in Christ the common head, are acted by one and the same Spirit, are guided by one rule, meet here at one throne of grace, and hope shortly to meet in one common inheritance;" a glorious one to be sure, but what or how glorious we cannot, nor at present need to know; but such it will be as vastly to exceed all our present hopes and expectations.

2. This common salvation is the subject matter of the faith of all the saints: The doctrine of it is what they all most heartily consent to: they esteem it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, 1. Tim. i. 15. It is the faith once, or at once, once for all, delivered to the saints; to which nothing can be added, from which nothing may be detracted, in which nothing more or less should be altered. Here let us abide; here we are safe; if we stir a step farther, we are in danger to be either entangled or seduced.

3. The apostles and evangelists all wrote to us of this common salvation. This cannot be doubted by those who have carefully read their writings. It is hard any should think they wrote chiefly to maintain particular schemes and opinions, especially such as they never did nor could think of. It is enough that they have fully declared to us, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost all that is necessary for every one to believe and do, in order to obtain a personal interest in the common salvation.

4. They who preach or write of the common salvation should give all diligence to do it well. Not allow themselves to offer to God or his people that which cost them nothing, or next to nothing; little or no pains or thought, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. This were to treat God irreverently, and man unjustly.

The apostle (though inspired) gave all diligence to write of the common salvation, what then will become of those, who (though uninspired) give no diligence or next to none, but say to the people (even in the name of God) *quicquid in buccam venerit, what comes next;* so they use scripture words, care not how they interpret or apply them? They who speak of sacred things, ought always to speak of them with the greatest reverence, care, and diligence.

5. They who have received the doctrine of this common salvation, must earnestly contend for it.

Earnestly, not furiously.] They who strive for the Christian faith, or in the Christian course, must strive lawfully, or they lose their labour, and run great hazard of losing their crown, 2 Tim. ii. 5. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,* 1la. i. 20. Lying for the truth is bad, and scolding for it is not much better.

Observe, They who have received the truth, must contend for it. But how? As the apostle did, by suffering patiently and courageously for it, not by making others suffer if they will not presently embrace every notion that we are pleased (proved or unproved) to call faith or fundamental. We must not suffer ourselves to be robbed of any essential article of Christian faith, by the cunning, craftiness, or specious plausible pretences of any who lie in wait to deceive, Eph. iv. 14. The apostle Paul tells us, *he preached the gospel* (mind it was the gospel) *with much contention,* 1 Thess. ii. 2. i. e. (as I understand it) with great earnestness, with an hearty zeal, and a great concern for the success of what he preached. But if we will understand contention in the common acceptance of the word, we must impartially consider with whom the apostle contended, and how; the enlarging on which would not be proper for this place.

III. We have here the occasion the apostle had to write to this purpose; as evil manners give rise to good laws, so dangerous errors often give just occasion to the proper defence of important truths.

4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here observe, 1. That ungodly men are the great enemies of the faith of Christ, and the peace of the church. They who deny or corrupt the one and disturb the other, are here expressly styled ungodly men. We might have truth with peace (a most desirable thing) were there none (ministers or private Christians) in our particular churches and congregations but truly godly men. A blessing scarcely to be looked or hoped for on this side heaven. Ungodly men raise scruples, start questions, cause divisions, widen breaches, merely to advance and promote their own selfish, ambitious, and covetous ends. This has been the plague of the church in all past ages, and I am afraid no age is or will be wholly free from such men and such practices as long as time shall last.

The late excellent Mr. Henry's pious and charitable note on this passage (and I wish it were duly laid to heart by all of us who yet survive) is, that nothing cuts us off from the church, but that which cuts us off from Christ; namely, reigning infidelity and ungodliness.

We must, as he goes on excellently, abhor the thought of branding particular parties; I add, or persons with this character; especially the doing it without the least proof, or as it too often happens, the least shadow of it.

Those are ungodly men who live without God in the world, who have no regard to God and conscience.

They, as the good man goes on, are to be dreaded, and consequently to be avoided, not only who are wicked by sins of commission, but also who are ungodly by sins of omission; who, for example, *restrain prayer before God*, who dare not reprove a rich man, when it is the duty of their place so to do, for fear they lose his favour, and the advantage they promise themselves therefrom, who do the work of the Lord negligently, &c.

2. That they are the worst of ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, i. e. who take encouragement to sin more boldly, because the grace of God hath abounded and doth still abound so wonderfully; who are hardened in their impieties by the extent and fulness of gospel grace, the design of which is to reduce men from sin and bring them unto God. Thus therefore to wax wanton under so great grace, and turn it into an occasion of working all uncleanness with greediness, and hardening ourselves in such a course by that very grace, which is the last and most forcible means to reclaim us from it, is to render ourselves the vilest, the worst, and most hopeless of sinners.

3. They who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, do in effect deny the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, i. e. (as Mr. Henry well expresseth it) they deny both natural and revealed religion.

They as he justly goes on, strike at the foundation of natural religion, for they deny the only Lord God; and they overturn all the frame of revealed religion, for they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Now his great design in establishing his, i. e. revealed religion in the world was to bring us unto God.

Note, *They who deny our Lord Jesus Christ*, do in effect deny the only Lord God. To deny revealed religion is virtually to overcome natural religion, for they stand or fall together, and they naturally yield light and force to each other. Would to God our modern deists, who live in the midst of gospel-light, would seriously consider this, and cautiously, diligently, and impartially examine what it is that hinders their receiving the gospel, while they profess themselves fully persuaded of all the principles and duties of natural religion! Never two tallies answered more exactly to each other than these do, so that it seems absurd to receive the one and reject the other. One would think it the fairer way to receive both, or reject both; though perhaps the more plausible method, especially in this age, is to act the part they do:

4. They who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, are ordained unto condemnation; so Mr. Henry, and no doubt it is a great truth. They, as he speaks, sin against the last, the greatest and the most perfect remedy; and so are without excuse. They who thus sin, must needs die of their wounds, of their disease; are of old ordained to this condemnation, whatever that expression means. But what if our translators had thought fit to have rendered the word in the original, which I shall not trouble the English reader with, of old forewritten of, as persons who would through their own sin and folly become the proper subjects of this condemnation, where had the harm been? plain Christians had not been troubled with dark, doubtful and perplexing thoughts about reprobation, which the strongest heads cannot enter far into, can indeed bear but little of without much loss and damage. It is not enough that early notice was given by inspired writers, that such seducers and wicked men should arise in later times, and that every one being forewarned of, should be fore armed against them?

5. We ought to contend earnestly for the faith in opposition to those who would corrupt or deprave it; such as are crept in unawares; a wretched character to be sure, but often very ill applied by weak and ignorant people, and even by those who themselves creep in unawares; who think their *ipse dixit* should stand for a law to all their followers and admirers. Surely faithful, humble ministers are helpers of their peoples' joy, peace, comfort, not lords of their faith! Whoever attempt to corrupt the faith, we ought to contend earnestly against them. The more busy and crafty the instruments and agents of Satan are to rob us of the truth, the more solicitous should we be to hold it fast. Always provided we be very sure that we fasten no wrong or injurious characters on persons, parties, or sentiments.

IV. The

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IV. The fair warning which the apostle in Christ's name gives to those, who have professed his holy religion, do afterwards desert and prove false to it.

5. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the Land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. 7. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

We have here a recital of the former judgment of God upon sinners, with design to awaken and terrify those to whom warning is given in this epistle.

Observe, The judgments of God are often denounced and executed in *terrorem*, for warning to others, rather than from immediate or particular displeasure against the offenders themselves; not that God is not displeased with them, but perhaps not more with them than with others, who at least for the present, do escape.

I will put you in remembrance. Observe, That what we do already know we still need to be put in remembrance of. Therefore there will always be need and use of a standing, stated ministry in Christian churches, though all the doctrines of faith, the essentials, are so plainly revealed in express words, or by the most near, plain, and immediate consequence, that he who runs may read and understand them. There wants no infallible interpreters, really or conceitedly such, for any such end or purpose. Some people do (weakly enough) suggest, if the scriptures do so plainly contain all that is necessary to salvation, what need or use can there be of a standing ministry? Why may we not content ourselves with staying at home, and reading our Bibles? But hold, not so fast; fair and softly. The inspired apostle has here fully, though not wholly answered this objection. Preaching is not designed, to teach us something new in every sermon, somewhat that we knew nothing of before; but to put us in remembrance, to call to mind things forgotten, to affect our passions, and engage and fix our resolutions, that our lives may be answerable to our faith.

Though you know these things, yet (as good Mr. Henry says) you still need to know them better. There are many things we have known, which yet we have unhappily forgotten. It is of no use or service to be put afresh in remembrance of them?

Now what are these things (I use the very words of the late excellent Mr. Henry, which in this exposition, which is designed, and accordingly modelled as a small part of the continuation of his, I always do where I well can) which we Christians need to be put in remembrance of?

1. The destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, *ver. 5.* St. Paul puts the Corinthians in mind of this, 1 Cor. x. the ten first verses of that chapter (as the scripture is always the best commentary upon itself) are the best explication of the fifth verse of this epistle of Jude; none therefore ought to presume upon their privileges, since many who were brought out of Egypt by a series of amazing miracles, yet perished in the wilderness by reason of their unbelief; let us not therefore be high-minded, but fear, Rom. xi. 20. Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it, Heb. iv. 1. They had miracles plenty, they were (as Mr. Henry styles it) their daily bread, yet even they perished in unbelief: We have greater (much greater) advantages than they had: let their error (their so fatal error) be our awful warning.

2. We are here put in remembrance of the fall of the angels, *ver. 6.* There were a great number of the angels who left their own habitation, i. e. who were not pleased with the posts and stations the Supreme Monarch of the universe had assigned and allotted to them, but thought (like discontented ministers in our age, I might say in every age) they deserved better; they would with the title of ministers be sovereigns, and in effect their sovereign should be their minister, do all, and only what they would have him, thus was pride the main and immediate cause or occasion of their fall.

Thus they quitted their post and rebelled against God, their Creator and sovereign Lord; but God did not spare them (high and great as they were) he would not truckle to them, he threw them off as a wise and good prince will a selfish and deceitful minister, and the great, the all-wise God could not be ignorant as the wisest and best of earthly princes often are, what designs they were hatching.

After all, what became of them? they thought to have dared and out-faced Omnipotence itself, but God was too hard for them, he cast them down to hell: they who would not be servants to their Maker and his will in their first state, were made captives to his justice, and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness: Here see what the condition of fallen angels is, they are in chains bound under the divine power and justice, bound over to the judgment of the great day; they are under darkness, who were once angels of light; so horribly in the dark are they, that they continue to fight against God; as if there were yet some small hope at least left them of prevailing and overcoming in the conflict: Dire insatiation! light and liberty concur, chains and darkness how well do they agree and suit each other?

The devils, once angels in the best sense, are reserved, &c. Observe, There is, undoubtedly there is a judgment to come; the fallen angels are reserved to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it? surely no: Let every reader consider this in due time.

Their chains are called everlasting, because it is impossible they should ever break loose from them, or make an escape; they are held fast and sure under them; the decree, the justice, the wrath of God, are the very chains under which fallen angels are held so fast: Hear and fear, O sinful mortals of mankind!

3. The apostle here calls to our remembrance the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, *ver. 7.* Even as, &c. and it is in allusion to the destruction of Pentapolis, or the five cities, that the miseries of the damned are set forth by a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; they were guilty of abominable wickedness, not to be named or thought on but with the utmost abhorrence and detestation; their ruin is a particular warning to all people to take heed of, and fly from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 14.

These lusts consumed the Sodomites with fire from heaven, and they are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; therefore take heed, imitate not their sins, lest the same plagues overtake you as did them: God is the same holy, just, pure Being now as then; and can the beastly pleasures of a mo-

ment make amends for your suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? Stand in awe therefore and sin not, Psalm iv. 4.

V. The charge the apostle exhibits against deceivers who were now seducing the disciples of Christ from the profession and practice of his holy religion.

8. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. 10. But those speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally as brute beasts in those things they corrupt themselves. 11. Woe unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, for reward, and perished in the gainfaying of Core. 12. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackest of darkness for ever.

He calls them *filthy dreamers*, forasmuch as delusion is a dream, and the beginning of an inlet to all manner of filthiness.

Note, Sin is filthiness; it renders men odious and vile in the sight of the most holy God, and makes them (sooner or later as penitent, or as punished to extremity, and without resource) vile in their own eyes, and in a while they become vile in the eyes of all about them.

These filthy dreamers dream themselves into a fool's paradise on earth, and into a real hell at last; let their character, course, and end be our reasonable and sufficient warning; like sins will produce like punishments and miseries.

1. They defile the flesh; the flesh or body is the immediate seat, and often the irritating occasion of many horrid pollutions, yet these though done in and against the body, do greatly defile and grievously maim and wound the soul; fleshly lusts do war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11. and in 2 Cor. vii. 1. we read of filthiness of flesh and spirit, each of which, though of different kinds, defile the whole man.

2. They despise dominion and speak evil of dignities; are of a disturbed mind and a seditious spirit; forgetting that the powers that be are ordained of God, Rom. xiii. 1. God requires us to speak evil of no man, Tit. iii. 2. but it is a great aggravation of the sin of evil-speaking, when what we say is pointed at magistrates, men whom God has set in authority over us, whom by blaspheming or speaking evil of we blaspheme God himself.

Or if we understand it with respect to religion, as some do that ought to have the dominion in this lower world; such evil-speakers despise the dominion of conscience, make a jest of it, and would banish it out of the world: and for the word of God, the rule of conscience, they despise that, the revelations of the divine will go for little with them; they are a rule of faith and manners, but not till they have explained them and imposed their sense of them upon all about them.

Or, as others account for the sense of this passage, the people of God, truly and especially so, are the dignities here spoken of or referred to according to that of the psalmist, Psalm cv. 15. Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

They speak evil of, &c.] Observe, Religion and its serious professors have been always and every where evil spoken of; though there is nothing in religion but what is very good, and deserves our highest regards; both as it is perfective of our natures and subservient to our truest and highest interests, yet this fact, as its enemies are pleased to call it, is every where spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22.

On this occasion the apostle brings in Michael the archangel, &c. *ver. 9.*

Interpreters are at a loss what is here meant by the body of Moses; some think, that the devil contended that Moses might have a public and honourable funeral, that the place where he was interred might be generally known hoping thereby to draw the Jews, so naturally prone thereto, to a new and fresh instance of idolatry. Dr. Scot thinks that by the body of Moses, we are to understand the Jewish church, whose destruction the devil strove and contended for, as the Christian church is called the body of Christ in the New Testament stile. Others bring other interpretations which I will not here trouble the reader with.

Though this contest was mighty, eager, and earnest, and Michael was victorious in the issue, yet he would not bring a railing accusation against the devil himself; he knew a good cause needed no such weapons to be employed in its defence; it is said, he durst not bring, &c. Why durst he not? not that he was afraid of the devil, but he believed God would be offended, if, in such a dispute he went that way to work; he thought it below him to engage in a trial of skill with the great enemy of God and man which of them should out fold or outtrail each other: A memorandum with good Mr. Henry, to all disputants never to bring railing accusations into their disputes: Truth needs no support from falsehood or scurrility. Some say, Michael would not bring a railing accusation against the devil, as knowing beforehand that he would be too hard for him at that weapon; (Mr. Henry.) Some think the apostle refers here to the remarkable passage we have Numb. xx. 7—14. Satan would have represented Moses under disadvantageous colours, which he, good man, had at that time, and upon that occasion given but too much handle for: Now Michael according to this account stands up in defence of Moses, and in the zeal of an upright and bold spirit, says to Satan, The Lord rebuke thee: he would not stand disputing with the devil, nor enter into a particular debate about the merits of that special cause; he knew Moses was his fellow-servant, a favourite of God, and he would not patiently suffer him to be insulted; no, not by the prince of devils; but in a just indignation cries out, The Lord rebuke thee; Like that of our Lord himself, Matt. iv. 10. Get thee hence, Satan. Moses was a dignity, a magistrate, one beloved and preferred by the great God; and the archangel thought it insufferable that such a one should be so treated by a vile apostate spirit of how high an order soever. So the lesson hence is, "That we ought to stand up in defence of those whom God owns, how severe soever Satan and his instruments are in their censures of them and their conduct." They who censure (in particular) upright magistrates,

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upon every slip in their behaviour, may expect to hear, *The Lord rebuke thee*; and divine rebukes are harder to be borne than careless sinners now think for.

Ver. 10. But these speak evil of the things which they know not, &c. Observe, They who *speak evil* of religion and godliness, *speak evil of the things which they know not*; for if they had known them, they would have spoke well of them; for nothing but good and excellent can be truly said of religion, and it is sad any thing different or opposite should ever be justly said of any of its professors; a religious life is the most safe, happy, comfortable and honourable life that is.

Observe, That men are most apt to *speak evil* of those persons and things which they know least of: How many had never suffered by slanderous tongues, if they had been better known; as on the other hand retirement screens some even from just censure.

But what they know naturally, &c. Observe it is hard if not impossible to find any obstinate enemies to the Christian religion who do not in their stated course live in open or secret contradiction to the very principles of natural religion; this many think hard and uncharitable; but I am afraid it will appear too true in *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*: The apostle likens such to *brute beasts*, though they often think and boast themselves, if not the wisest, yet at least the wittiest part of mankind.

In those things they corrupt themselves, i. e. In the plainest and most natural and necessary things; things that lie most open and obvious to natural reason and conscience; even in *those things they corrupt*, debase and defile themselves; the fault, whatever it is, lies not in their understandings or apprehensions, but in their depraved wills, disordered appetites and affections; they could and might have acted better, but then they must have offered violence to those vile affections which they obstinately chose rather to gratify than mortify.

Ver. 11. He represents them as followers of *Cain*, and in *ver. 12, 13.* as atheistical and profane people that thought little, and perhaps believed not much of God or a future world; as greedy and covetous, who so they could but gain present worldly advantages cared not what came next; rebels to God and man, who like *Core* run into attempts in which they must assuredly perish, as he did.

Ver. 12. These are spots in your feasts of charity, &c. or love-feasts, so much spoken of by the antients; these happened by whatever means or resistance to be admitted among them, but were spots in them, defiled and defiling. Observe, It is a great reproach, though unjust and accidental to religion, when they who profess it and join in the solemnest institution of it, are in heart and life unsuitable, and even contrary to it.

These are spots. Yet how common in all Christian societies here on earth, the very best not excepted, are such blemishes! the more is the pity! the Lord remedy it in his due time and way; not in men's blind and rigorous way of plucking up *the wheat with the tares*: But in the heaven we are waiting, hoping and preparing for, there is none of this mad work, none of these disorderly doings.

When they feast with you, they feed themselves without fear. Arrant gluttons no doubt they were; such as only minded the gratifying of their appetites with the daintiness and plenty of their fare; they had no regard to *Solomon's* caution, *Prov. xxiii. 2.*

Mr. Henry's note on this passage is, In common eating and drinking an holy fear is necessary, much more in feasting; though we may sometimes be more easily and insensibly overcome at a common meal than at a feast; for, in the case supposed, we are less upon our guard, and sometimes, at least to some persons, the plenty of a feast is its own antidote, as to others it may prove a dangerous snare.

Clouds they are without water. Which promise rain in time of drought, but perform nothing of what they promise. Such is the case of formal professors, who, at first setting out promise much, like early blossoming trees in a forward spring, but in conclusion bring forth little or no fruit.

Carried about of winds. Light and empty, easily driven about this way or that, as the wind happens to sit; such are empty, ungrounded professors, an easy prey to every seducer: It is amazing to hear many talk so confidently of so many things of which they know little or nothing, and yet have not the wisdom and humility to discern and be sensible how little they know! How happy would our world be, if men either knew more, or practically knew how little they know!

Trees whose fruit withereth, &c. Trees they are, for they are planted in the Lord's vineyard, yet fruitless ones.

Observe, They, whose fruit withereth, may be justly said to be *without fruit*; as good never a whit, as never the better; It is a sad thing when men seem to begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, which is almost as common a case as it is an awful one.

The text speaks of such as being *twice dead*, one would think to be *once dead* were enough; we none of us, till grace renew us to a higher degree than ordinary, love to think of *dying once*, though this is appointed for us all: What then is the meaning of this being *twice dead*? Take *Mr. Henry's* answer in his own words: "They had been *once dead* in their natural, fallen, lapsed state; but they seemed to recover, and a man in a swoon, to be brought to life again, when they took upon them the profession of the Christian religion; but now they are *dead again* by the evident proofs they have given of their hypocrisy; whatever they seemed, they had nothing truly vital in them."

Plucked up by the roots. As we commonly serve *dead trees*, from which we expect no more fruit; they are *dead, dead, dead, why lumber they the ground?* away with them to the fire.

Ver. 13. Raging waves of the sea. Boisterous, noisy and clamorous; full of talk and turbulency, but with little (if any) sense or meaning.

Foaming out their own shame. Creating much uneasiness to men of better sense and calmer tempers, which yet will in the end turn to their own great shame and just reproach. The psalmist's prayer ought always to be that of every honest and good man: *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me*, Psalm xxv. 21. and if it will not, let me be unpreserved: If honesty signify little now, knavery will signify much less, and that in a very little while.

Raging waves are a terror to sailing passengers, but when they are got to port the waves are forgotten as if no longer in being; their noise and terror is for ever ended.

Wandering stars. Planets that are erratic in their motions keep not that steady, regular course the fixed ones do, but shift their stations, that one has sometimes much ado to know where to find them: This allusion carries in it a lively emblem of false teachers, who are sometimes here and sometimes there, so that one knows not where nor how to fix them: In the main things, at least one would think something should be fixed and steady; and, I should think this might be without infallibility, or any pretensions to it in us poor mortals: In religion and politics, the great subjects of present debate, surely there are certain *flamina* in which wise and good, honest and disinterested men might agree, without throwing the populace into the utmost anguish and distress of mind, or blowing up their passions

into rage and fury, without letting them know what they say, or whereof they affirm.

To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Observe, False teachers are to expect the worst of punishments in this and a future world: Not every one who teacheth by mistake any thing that is not exactly true; for who then, in any public assembly, durst open a Bible to teach others, unless he thought himself equal or superior to the angels of God in heaven? but who prevaricates, dissembles, would lead others into by-paths and sideways, that he may have opportunity to make a gain or pray of them, or, (in the apostle's phrase) to make merchandise of them, 2 Pet. ii. 3. But enough of this. As for *the blackness of darkness for ever*, I shall only say, that this terrible expression, with all the horror it imports, belongs to false teachers, truly not slanderously so called, who corrupt the word of God, and betray the souls of men: And if this will not make both ministers and people cautious, I know not what will.

VI. The doom of this wicked people is declared.

14. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, 15. To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having mens persons in admiration because of advantage.

This prophecy of Enoch we have no mention made of in any other part or place of scripture, yet now it is scripture that there was such a prophecy; one plain text of scripture is proof enough of any one point that we are required to believe, especially when relating to a matter of fact; but in matters of faith, necessary saving faith, God has not seen fit, blessed be his holy name he has not, to try us so far; there is no fundamental of Christian religion, truly so called, which we have not inculcated over and over in the New Testament; by which we may know what the Holy Ghost does, and consequently we ought to lay the greatest stress upon. Some say this prophecy of Enoch was preserved by tradition in the Jewish church; others, that the apostle Jude was immediately inspired with the notice of it: be that how it will, it is certain there was such a prophecy of ancient date, of long standing and universally received in the old Testament church; and it is a main point of our New Testament creed.

Observe, That Christ's coming to judgment was prophesied of as early as the middle of the patriarchal age, and was therefore even then a received and acknowledged truth.

The Lord cometh with his holy myriads; including both angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. What a glorious time will that be, when Christ shall come with ten thousand of these? And we are told for what great and awful ends and purposes he will come so accompanied and attended, namely, to execute judgment upon all.

Observe, It was spoken of then, so long ago, as a thing just at hand; Behold, the Lord cometh, he is just a coming, he will be upon you before you are aware, and unless you be very cautious and diligent, before you are provided to meet him comfortably. He cometh, 1. To execute judgment upon the wicked. 2. To convince them.

Observe, Christ will condemn none without precedent trial and conviction; such conviction as shall at least silence even themselves; they shall have no excuse or apology to make, that they either can or dare then stand by; then every mouth shall be stopped, the judge and his sentence shall be (by all the impartial) approved and applauded, and even the guilty condemned criminals shall be speechless, though at present they want not bold and special pleas, which they vent with all assurance and confidence; and yet it is sure the mock-trials of prisoners in the goal among themselves, and the real trial at the bar before the proper judge, soon appear to be very different things.

I cannot pass this fifteenth verse without taking notice how often, and how emphatically the word *ungodly* is repeated in it; no less than four times; *ungodly* then, *ungodly sinners*, *ungodly deeds*, and, as to the manner, *ungodly committed*. Godly or *ungodly* signifies little with men now-a-days, unless it be to scoff at and deride even the very expressions; but it is not so in the language of the Holy Ghost.

Observe, Omissions, as well as commissions, must be accounted for in the day of judgment.

Observe farther, *Hard speeches* of one another, especially if ill-grounded, will most certainly come in account at the judgment of the great day: Let us all take care in time. If thou, said one of our good old puritans suite (a miscalled heretic, or) schismatic, and God find a real saint bleeding, look thou to it, how thou wilt answer it; it may be too late to say before the angel, it was an error, Eccles. v. 6. I only here allude to that expression of the divinely inspired writer.

In the sixteenth verse the apostle enlarges further on the character of these evil men and seducers: they are *murmurers, complainers, &c.*

Observe, That a murmuring complaining temper, indulged and expressed, lays men under a very ill character; such are very weak at least, and for the most part very wicked; they murmur against God and his providence, against men and their conduct; they are angry at every thing that happens, and never pleased with their own state and condition in the world, as not thinking it good enough for them.

Such walk after their own lusts. Their will, their appetite, their fancy is their only rule and law. *Mr. Henry's* note here is, That they who please their sinful appetites, are most prone to yield to their ungovernable passions.

VII. The exhortation the apostle here gives to those to whom he wrote; which, with the doxology in the two last verses, concludes the epistle.

17. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18. How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. 20. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. 21. Keep yourselves, in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus

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JESUS CHRIST unto eternal life. 22. And of some have compassion making a difference: 23. And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. 24. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. 25. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Ver. 17. But, beloved, remember, &c.] Remember, take heed that ye think it not strange (*viz.* so as to stumble and be offended, and have your faith staggered by it) that such people as the seducers before described and warned against should arise (and that early) in the Christian church, seeing all this was foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently, the accomplishment of it in the event, is a confirmation of your faith, instead of being in the least an occasion of shaking and unsettling you therein.

Observe, 1. They who would persuade, must make it evident that they sincerely love those whom they would persuade; "bitter words and hard usage never did, nor never will convince, much less persuade any body."

Observe, 2. The words which inspired persons have spoken or (written) duly remembered and reflected on, are the best preservative against dangerous errors; this will always be so, till men have learnt to speak better than God himself.

Observe, 3. We ought not to be offended if errors and persecutions arise and prevail in the Christian church, this was foretold, and therefore we should not think worse of Christ's person, doctrine, or cross, when we see it fulfilled: See 1 Tim. iv. 1. and 2 Tim. iii. 1, and 2 Pet. iii. 3. Therefore we must not think it strange, but comfort ourselves with this, that (in the midst of all this hurly burly) Christ will maintain his church, and make good his promise, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18.

Observe, 4. The more religion is ridiculed and persecuted, the faster hold we should take and keep of it; being forewarned, we should flee that we are forearmed; under such trials we should stand firm, and not be *shaken in mind*, 2 Thess. ii. 2.

Ver. 19. These be they which separate, &c.] Observe, 1. Sensualists are the worst separatists; they separate themselves from God and Christ, and his church, to the devil, world, and flesh, by their ungodly courses and vicious practices: and that is a great deal worse than separation from any particular branch of the visible church on account of opinions, or modes and circumstances of external government or worship; though many can patiently bear with the former, while they are plentifully and almost perpetually railing at the latter; as if no sin were damnable, but what they are pleased to call schism.

Observe, 2. That *sensual men have not the Spirit*, *viz.* of God and Christ, the Spirit of holiness, which whoever has not, is none of Christ's, does not belong to him, Rom. viii. 9.

Observe, 3. The worse others are, the better should we endeavour and approve ourselves to be; the more busy Satan and his instruments are to pervert others in judgment or practice, the more tenacious should we be of sound doctrine and a good conversation, *holding fast the faithful word as we have been (divinely) taught, holding the mystery of faith and a pure conscience*, Tit. i. 9. 1 Tim. iii. 9.

Ver. 20. Building up, &c.] Observe, The way to hold fast our profession, is to hold on in it; having laid our foundation well in a sound faith, and a sincere upright heart, we must build upon it, *i. e.* make farther progress continually, and we should take care with what materials we carry on our building. *viz.* gold, silver, precious stones, not wood, hay, stubble, 1 Cor. iii. 12. Right principles, and a regular conversation will stand the test, even of the fiery trial; but whatever we mix of baser alloy, though we be in the main sincere, we shall suffer loss by it; and though our persons be saved, all that part of our work shall be consumed; and if we ourselves escape, it will be with great danger and difficulty, as from an house on fire on every side.

Praying in the Holy Ghost.] Observe, 1. Prayer is the nurse of faith, the way to *build up ourselves in our most holy faith* is to *continue instant in prayer*, Rom. xii. 12.

Observe, 2. Our prayers are then most likely to prevail when we *pray in the Holy Ghost*, *i. e.* under his guidance and influence, according to the rule of his word, with faith, fervency, and constant persevering importunity; this is *praying in the Holy Ghost*, whether it be done by or without a set or prescribed form.

Ver. 21. Keep yourselves, &c.] i. e. 1. Keep up the grace of love to God in lively vigorous actions and exercises in your souls. 2. Take heed of throwing yourselves out of the love of God to you, or its delightful, cheering, strengthening manifestations; *keep yourselves in the way of God*, if you would continue in his love.

Looking for the mercy, &c.] Observe, 1. *Eternal life* is to be looked

for only through *mercy*; mercy is our only plea, not merit; or if merit, not our own but another's, who has merited for us what otherwise we could have laid no claim to, nor have entertained any well grounded hope of.

Observe, 2. It is said, not only through the *mercy* of God as our Creator; but through the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ as redeemer; all that come to heaven must come thither through our Lord Jesus Christ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, but that of the Lord Jesus only, Acts iv. 12. compared with ver. 10.

Observe, 3. That a believing expectation of *eternal life*, will arm us against the snares of sin, 3 Pet. iii. 14. a lively faith of the *blessed hope*, will help us to mortify our cursed lusts.

Ver. 22, 23. And of some have compassion, &c.] Observe, 1. We ought to do all we can to rescue others out of the snare of the devil, that they may be saved from (or recovered, when entangled therein, out of) dangerous errors, or pernicious practices: We are not only (under God) our own keepers, but every man ought to be (as much as in him lies) his brother's keeper; none but a wicked Cain will contradict this, Gen. iv. 9. We must watch over one another, faithfully (yet prudently) reprove each other, set a good example to all about us.

And this must be done with *compassion, making a difference*. How is that? We must distinguish between the weak and the wilful.

1. *Of some* we must have compassion, treat them with all tenderness, *restore them in the spirit of meekness*, not be needlessly harsh and severe in our censures of them and their actions, not proud and haughty in our carriage towards them, not implacable, not averse to reconciliation with them, or admitting them to the friendship they formerly had with us, when they give evident or even strongly hopeful tokens of a sincere repentance: if God hath forgiven them, why should not we? we infinitely more need his forgiveness than they do or can do ours; though perhaps neither they nor we are justly or sufficiently sensible of this.

2. *Others save with fear.]* Urging upon them the terrors of the Lord, endeavour to frighten them out of their sins; preach hell and damnation to them, to good Mr. Henry.

But what if prudence and caution in administering even the most just and severe reproofs be what is primarily and chiefly here intimated, (I do but offer it) *q. d.* fear lest you frustrate your own good intentions and honest designs by rash and imprudent management, that you do not burden; instead of reclaiming, even where greater degrees of severity are requisite, than in the immediately foregoing instance: we are often apt to over do, when we are sure we mean honestly, and think we are right in the main; yet the very worst are not needlessly or rashly, or to extremity to be provoked; lest they be thereby farther hardened through our default.

Hating even the garment, &c.] i. e. keeping yourselves at the utmost distance from what is or appears evil and designing, and endeavouring that others may do so too; avoid as Mr. Henry speaks, *all that leads to sin, or that looks like sin*, 1 Thess. v. 22.

Lastly, the apostle concludes this epistle with a solemn ascription of glory to the great God. Note, Whatever is the subject or argument we have been speaking of, ascribing glory to God as fittest for us to conclude with, ver. 24, 25.

Note farther, God is able, and he is as willing as able to *keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory*: not as those who have never been faulty, for what has once been done can never be rendered undone even by Omnipotence itself, for that implies a contradiction, but as those whose faults shall not be imputed to their ruin, which, but for God's mercy and a Saviour's merits, they might most justly have been.

Before the presence of his glory.] Observe, 1. That the glory of the Lord will shortly be present, we now look upon it as distant, and too many look upon it as uncertain, but it will come, and it will be manifest and apparent, *every eye shall see them*, Rev. i. 7. this is now the object of our faith; but hereafter, and sure it cannot now be long too, it will be the object of our sense; *whom we now believe in, him we shall shortly see* to our unspeakable joy and comfort, or unspeakable terror and consternation, 1 Pet. i. 8.

Observe, 2. That all sincere real believers shall be presented, at the Lord Redeemer's appearance and coming, by him their glorious Head to the Father, in order to his approbation, acceptance, and reward; they were given him of the Father, and of all that were so given him he has lost none, nor will lose any one, not an individual, a single soul, but will present them all perfectly holy and happy, when he shall surrender his mediatorial kingdom to his God, and our God; to his Father, and our Father, John vi. 39. with chap. xvii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 24.

Observe, 3. When believers shall be *presented faultless*, it will be with exceeding joy. Alas! how our faults fill us with fears, doubts, and sorrows; but be of good cheer, if we are sincere, we shall be, our dear Redeemer has undertaken for it we shall be *presented faultless*; where there is no sin, there will be no sorrow; where there is the perfection of holiness there will be the perfection of joy: Surely, the God who can and will do all this, is worthy to have *glory, majesty, dominion, and power* ascribed to him, *both now and for ever!* And to this we may well with the apostle affix our hearty Amen.

THE END OF THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
OF THE
REVELATION of St. JOHN the Divine.

It ought to be no prejudice to the credit and authority of this book, that it has been rejected by men of corrupt minds, such as Cerdon and Marcion, and doubted of by men of a better character; for that has been the lot of other parts of holy writ, and of the divine author of the Scripture himself: The image and superscription of this book is truly sacred and divine, the matter of it agreeable with other prophetic books, particularly Ezekiel and Daniel; the church of God has generally received it, and found good counsel and great comfort in it.

From the beginning the church of God has been blessed with prophecy, that glorious prediction of breaking the serpent's head; was the stay and support of the patriarchal age, and the many prophecies there were concerning the Messiah to come, were the gospel of the Old Testament; Christ himself prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem, and about the time in which that was accomplished, he intrusted the apostle John with this book of revelation, to deliver it to the church as a prediction of the most important events that should happen to it till the end of time, for the support of the faith of his people, and the direction of their hope; it is called the Revelation, because God therein discovers those things which could never have been sifted out by the reasonings of human understanding; those deep things of God which no man knows but the Spirit of God, and those to whom he reveals them.

C H A P. I.

This chapter is a general preface to the whole book, and contains, 1. An inscription, declaring the original and the design of it, ver. 1, 2. 2. The apostolical benediction pronounced on all those that shall pay a due regard to the contents of this book, ver. 3—8. 3. A glorious vision or appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to the apostle John, when he delivered to him this revelation, from ver. 9. to the end of the chapter.

1. THE revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw:

Here we have, 1. What we may call the pedigree of this Book.

1. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ; the whole bible is so; for all revelation comes through Christ, and all enters in him; and especially in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son, and concerning his Son: Christ, as the king of his church, has been pleased thus far to let his church know, by what rules and methods he will proceed in his government; and as the prophet of the church, he has made known to us the things that shall be hereafter.

2. It is a revelation which God gave unto Christ: Though Christ is himself God, and as such, has light and life in himself, yet, as he sustains the office of mediator between God and man, he receives his instructions from the Father: the human nature of Christ, though endowed with the greatest sagacity, judgment, and penetration, yet could not in a way of reason, discover these great events, which not being produced by natural causes, but wholly depending upon the will of God, could only be the object of divine preference, and must come to a created mind only by revelation. Our Lord Jesus is the great trustee of divine revelation; it is to him we owe the knowledge we have of what we are to expect from God, and what he expects from us.

3. This revelation Christ sent and signified by his angel. Observe here, The admirable order of divine revelation: God gave it to Christ, and Christ employed an angel to communicate it to the churches. The angels are God's messengers, they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; they are Christ's servants, principalities and powers are subject to him; all the angels of God are obliged to worship him.

4. The angel signified it to the apostle John; as the angels are the messengers of Christ, the ministers are the messengers of the churches; what they receive from heaven they are to communicate to the churches. John was the apostle chosen for this service. Some think he was the only one surviving, the rest having sealed their testimony with their blood. This was to be the last book of divine revelation, and therefore notified to the church by the last of the apostles. John was the beloved disciple, he was under the New Testament, as the prophet Daniel under the Old; a man greatly beloved; he was the servant of Christ; he was an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet: he served Christ in all the three extraordinary offices of the church. James was an apostle, but not a prophet nor evangelist; Matthew was an apostle and evangelist; but not a prophet; Luke was an evangelist, but neither a prophet nor apostle; but John was all three; and so Christ calls him in an eminent sense his servant John.

5. John was to deliver this revelation to the church; to all his servants. For the revelation was not designed only for the use of Christ's extraordinary servants the ministers: but for all his servants the members of the church; they have all a right to the oracles of God, and all have their concern in them.

2. Here we have the subject matter of this revelation, viz. the things that must shortly come to pass. The evangelists give us an account of the things that are past; prophecy gives us an account of things to come. These future events are shewed, and not in the clearest light in which God could have set them, but in such a light as he saw most proper, and which would best answer his wise and holy purposes. Had they been as clearly foretold in all their circumstances as God would have revealed them, the prediction might have prevented the accomplishment; but they are foretold more darkly to beget in us a veneration for the scripture, and to engage our attention and excite our enquiry; and we have in this revelation a general idea of the methods of divine providence and government in and about the church, and many good lessons may be learned thereby. These events (it is said) were such as should not only come to pass surely, but

shortly; that is, they would begin to come to pass very shortly, and the whole would be accomplished in a short time. For now the last ages of the world were come.

3. Here is an attestation of the prophecy, ver. 2. It was signified to John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. It is observable that the historical books of the Old Testament have not always the name of the historian prefixed to them, as in the books of Judges, Kings, Chronicles; but in the prophetic books the name is always prefixed, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, &c. So in the New Testament, though John did not prefix his name to his first epistle, yet he does to this prophecy, as ready to vouch and answer for the truth of it, and he does not only give us his name, but his office. He was one who bare record of the word of God in general, and of the testimony of Jesus in particular, and of all things that he saw; he was an eye-witness, and he concealed nothing that he saw. Nothing recorded in this revelation was his invention or imagination; but all was the record of God, and the testimony of Jesus; and as he added nothing to it, so he kept back no part of the counsels of God.

3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

4. JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; 5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth: Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. 6. And he hath made us kings and priests, unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: even so, Amen. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

We have here an apostolical benediction of those that should give a due regard to this divine revelation; and this benediction is given more generally and more especially.

1. More generally, to all that either read or hear the words of the prophecy. This blessing seems to be pronounced with a design to encourage us to study this book, and not be weary of looking into it upon the account of the obscurity of many things in it; it will repay the labour of the careful and attentive reader. Observe, 1. It is a blessed privilege to enjoy the oracles of God. This was one of the principle advantages the Jews had above the Gentiles. 2. It is a blessed thing to study the scriptures: they are well employed that search the scriptures. 3. It is a privilege not only to read the scriptures ourselves, but to hear them read by others, who are qualified to give us the sense of what they read, and to lead us unto an understanding of them. 4. It is not sufficient to our blessedness that we read and hear the scriptures, but we must keep the things that are written; we must keep them in our memories, in our minds, in our affections, and in practice, and we shall be blessed in the deed. 5. The nearer we come to the accomplishment of the scriptures, the greater regard we should give unto them. The time is at hand, and we should be so much the more attentive as we see the day approaching.

2. The apostolical benediction is pronounced more especially and particularly to the seven Asian churches, ver. 4. These seven churches are named in ver. 11. and distinct messages sent to each of them respectively in the chapters following. The apostolical blessing is more expressly directed to these, because they were nearest to him, who was now in the isle of Patmos, and perhaps he had the peculiar care of them and superintendency over them, not excluding any of the rest of the apostles, if any of them were now living. Here observe,

1. What the blessing is which he pronounceth on all the faithful in these churches; grace and peace, holiness and comfort. Grace, that is, the good will

will of God towards us, and his good work in us; and peace, that is, the sweet evidence and assurance of this grace. There can be no true peace where there is not true grace; and where grace goes before, peace will follow.

2. From whence this blessing is to come. In whose name does the apostle bless the churches? Why, in the name of God, of the whole Trinity; for this is an act of adoration, and God only is the proper object of it; his ministers must bless the people in no name but his alone. And here,

1. The Father is first named: God the Father, which may be taken either essentially for God as God, or personally, for the first person in the ever blessed Trinity, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is described as the Jehovah, which is, and which was, and which is to come, eternal, unchangeable, the same to the Old Testament church which was, and to the New Testament church which is, and will be the same to the church triumphant which is to come.

2. The holy Spirit called the seven spirits, not seven in number, or in nature, but the infinite perfect Spirit of God, in whom there is a diversity of gifts and operations. He is before the throne: for as God made, so he governs all things by his Spirit.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ. He mentions him after the Spirit, because he intended to enlarge more upon the person of Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, whom he had seen dwelling on earth before, and now saw again in a glorious form; and observe the particular account we have here of Christ, *ver. 5.*

1. He is a faithful witness; He was from eternity a witness to all the counsels of God, *John xi. 11.* and he was in time a faithful witness to God's revealed will, who has now spoken to us by his Son, and upon his testimony we may safely depend, for he is a faithful witness cannot be deceived, and cannot deceive us.

2. He is the first-begotten or first-born from the dead, or the first parent and head of the resurrection, the only one that raised himself by his own power, and who will by the same power raise up his people from their graves to everlasting honour. For he has begotten them again to a lively hope, by his resurrection from the dead.

3. He is the prince of the kings of the earth, from him they have their authority; by him their power is limited, and their wrath restrained; by him their counsels are over-ruled, and to him they are accountable. This is good news to the church, and it is good evidence of the Godhead of Christ, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

4. He is the great friend of his church and people; one that has done great things for them, and this out of pure disinterested affection; he has loved them, and in pursuance of that everlasting love he has, 1. Washed them from their sins in his own blood. Sins leave a stain upon the soul, a stain of guilt and of pollution; nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ, and rather than it should not be washed out, Christ was willing to shed his own blood to purchase pardon and purity for them. 2. He has made them kings and priests to God and his Father. Having justified and sanctified them, he makes them kings to his Father, that is, in his Father's account, and with his approbation, and for his glory. As kings they overcome the world, mortify sin, govern their own spirits, conquer Satan, have power and prevalency with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He hath made them priests, given them access to God, enabled them to enter into the holiest, and to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices; has given them an unction suitable to this character; and for these high honours and favours they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory for ever.

5. He will be the judge of the world, *ver. 7. Behold he cometh, and every eye shall see him.* This book, the revelation, begins and ends with a prediction of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should set ourselves to meditate frequently upon the second coming of Christ, and keep it in the eye of our faith and expectation. John speaks as if he saw that day, *behold, he cometh*; as sure as if you beheld him with your eyes. *He cometh with clouds*, which are his chariot and pavilion; he will come publicly, *every eye shall see him*; the eye of his people, the eye of his enemies, every eye, yours and mine. He shall come to the terror of those that pierced him, and have not repented; and of all that have wounded and crucified him afresh by their apostasy from him, and to the astonishment of the pagan world. For he comes to take vengeance on those that know not God, as well as on those that obey not the gospel of Christ.

6. This account of Christ is ratified and confirmed by himself, *ver. 8.* in which our Lord Jesus justly challenges the same honour and power that is ascribed to the Father, *ver. 4.* He is the beginning and the end, all things are from him and for him; he is the Almighty; he is the same eternal and unchangeable one. And surely whosoever presumes to blot out one character of this name of Christ, deserves to have his name blotted out of the book of life. They that honour him, he will honour; but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. 11. Saying, I am Alpha, and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. 12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. 13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle: 14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the

first and the last. 18. I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. 19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are; and the things which shall be hereafter. 20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

We are now come to that glorious vision that the apostle had of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he came to deliver this revelation to him. Where observe,

1. The account given of the person who was favoured with this vision. And he describes himself,

1. By his present state and condition. He was the brother and companion of these churches in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ. He was at this time, as the rest of true Christians were, a persecuted man, banished, and perhaps imprisoned for his adherence to Christ. He was their brother, though an apostle; he seems to value himself upon his relation to the church, rather than his authority in it. Judas may be an apostle, but not a brother in the family of God: he was their companion. The children of God should choose communion and society with each other; he was their companion in tribulation. The persecuted servants of God do not suffer alone, the same trials are accomplished in others; he was their companion in patience, not only a sharer with them in suffering circumstances, but in suffering graces. If we have the patience of the saints, we should not grudge to meet with their trials. He was their brother and companion in the patience of the kingdom of Christ, a sufferer for Christ's cause, for asserting his kingly power over the church of the world, and for adhering to it against all that would usurp upon it. But this account he gives of his present state, he acknowledges his engagements to sympathize with them, and to endeavour to give them counsel and comfort, and bespeaks their more careful attention to what he had to say to them from Christ their common Lord.

2. By the place where he was when he was favoured with this vision. He was in the isle of Patmos; he does not say who banished him thither; it becomes Christians to speak sparingly and modestly of their own sufferings. Patmos is said to be an island in the Aegean sea, one of those called Cyclades, and was about 35 miles in compass; but under this confinement it was the apostle's comfort that he did not suffer as an evil-doer, but it was for the testimony of Jesus, for bearing witness to Christ as the Immanuel, the Saviour. This was a cause worth suffering for; and the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon this persecuted apostle.

3. The day and time in which he had this vision. 'T was the Lord's day; the day which Christ had separated and set apart for himself, as the Eucharist is called the Lord's Supper. Surely this can be no other than the Christian sabbath; the first day of the week to be observed in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. Let us who call him our Lord honour him on his own day; the day which the Lord hath made, and in which we ought to rejoice.

4. The frame that his soul was in at this time. He was in the Spirit; he was not only in a rapture when he received the vision, but before he received it, he was in a serious, heavenly, spiritual frame under the blessed gracious influences of the Spirit of God. God usually prepares the souls of his people for uncommon manifestations of himself, by the quickening, sanctifying influences of his good Spirit. Those that would enjoy communion with God on the Lord's day, must endeavour to abstract their thoughts and affections from flesh and fleshly things, and be wholly taken up with things of a spiritual nature.

2. The apostle gives an account of what he heard when thus in the Spirit. An alarm was given as with the sound of a trumpet, and then he heard a voice, the voice of Christ applying to himself, the character before given, *the first and the last*, and commanding the apostle to commit to writing the things that were now to be revealed to him, and to send it immediately to the seven Asian churches, whose names are mentioned. Thus our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, gave the apostle notice of his glorious appearance as the sound of a trumpet.

2. We have now an account of what he saw; he turned to see the voice, whose it was, and whence it came; and then a wonderful scene of vision opened itself to him.

1. He saw a representation of the church under the emblem of seven golden candlesticks, as it is explained in the last verse of the chapter; the churches are compared to candlesticks, because they hold forth the light of the gospel to advantage; the churches are not candles, Christ only is our light, and his gospel our lamp, but they receive their light from Christ and the gospel, and hold it forth to others; they are golden candlesticks for they should be precious and pure, comparable to fine gold; not only the ministers, but the members of the churches ought to be such: their light should so shine before men, as to engage others to true glory to God.

2. He saw a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks; for he has promised to be with his churches always to the end of the world, filling them with light and life, and love, for he is the very animating, informing soul of the church. And here we observe,

1. The glorious form in which Christ appeared in several particulars. 1. He was clothed with a garment down to the foot, a princely and priestly robe denoting righteousness and honour. 2. He was girt about with a golden girdle, the breast plate of the high priest, on which the names of his people are engraven; he was ready girt to do all the work of a redeemer. 3. His head and hairs were white like wool or snow; he was the ancient of days; his hoary head was no sign of decay, but it was indeed a crown of glory. 4. His eyes were as a flame of fire, piercing and penetrating into the very hearts and reins of men, scattering terrors among his adversaries. 5. His feet were like unto fine burning brass, strong and steadfast supporting his own interest; and subduing his enemies, and treading them to powder. 6. His voice was as the sound of many waters, of many rivers falling in together. He can and will make himself heard to those that are afar off, as well as to those that are here. His gospel is a profusent and mighty stream fed by the upper springs of infinite wisdom and knowledge. 7. He had in his right hand seven stars, that is the ministers of the churches who are under his direction, have all the light and influence from him, and are secured and preserved by him. 8. Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword, his word which both wounds and heals, strikes at sins on the right hand and on the left. 9. His countenance was as the sun shining, its strength too bright and dazzling for mortal eyes to behold.

2. The impression this appearance of Christ made upon the apostle John, *ver. 17. He fell at the feet of Christ as dead*, he was overpowered with the greatness

greatness of that lustre and glory in which Christ appeared, though he had been so familiar with him before. How well it is for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terrors shall not make us afraid, for none can see the face of God and live!

3. The condescending goodness of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, *ver. 17. he laid his hand upon him*, he raised him up, he did not plead against him with great power, but he put strength into him, he spoke kind words to him. 1. Words of comfort and encouragement; *fear not*. He commanded away the slavish fears of his disciples. 2. Words of instruction; telling him particularly who he was that thus appeared to him. And here he acquaints him, 1. with his divine nature, *the first and the last*. 2. With his former sufferings, *I was dead*; the very same that his disciples saw upon the cross dying for the sins of men. 3. With his resurrection and life; *I live and am alive for evermore*, have conquered death and open the grave, and am partaker of an endless life. 4. With his office and authority; *I have the keys of hell and of death*, a sovereign dominion in and over the invisible world, opening and none can shut, shutting so as that none can open; opening the gates of death when he pleases, and the gates of the eternal world, of happiness or misery, as the judge of all, from whose sentence there lies no appeal. 5. With his will and pleasures, *that John should write both the things he had seen, and the things that are, and that should be hereafter*. 6. With the meaning of the seven stars that they are the ministers of the churches; and of the seven candlesticks, that they are the seven churches to whom Christ would now send by him particular and proper messages.

C H A P. II.

The apostle John having in the foregoing chapter written the things which he had seen, now proceeds to write the things that are according to the command of God, chap. i. 19. i. e. the present state of the seven churches of Asia, with which he had a particular acquaintance, and for which he had a tender concern. He was directed to write to every one of them according to their present state and circumstance, and to inscribe every letter to the angel of that church, to the minister or rather ministry of that church, called angels, because they are the messengers of God to mankind. In this chapter we have, 1. The message sent to Ephesus, from *ver. 1—8*. 2. To Smyrna, from *ver. 8—12*. 3. To Pergamos, from *ver. 12—18*. 4. To Thyatira, from *ver. 18*. to the end.

1. **U**NTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things, saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not; and hast found them liars: 3. And hast born, and hast patience; and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

We have here, 1. The inspiration, where observe,

1. To whom the first of these epistles is directed. To the church of Ephesus, a famous church planted by the apostle Paul, *Acts xix.* and after that watered and governed by St. John, who had his residence very much there. We can hardly think that Timothy was the angel, or sole pastor and bishop of this church at this time, that he who was of a very excellent spirit, and naturally cared for the good state of the souls of the people, should become so remiss as to deserve the rebukes given to the ministry of this church. Observe,

2. From whom this epistle to Ephesus was sent. And here we have one of those titles, that were given to Christ in his appearance to John in the chapter foregoing, *viz. He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, chap. i. 13—16. This title consists of two parts:

1. *He that holds the stars in his right hand*: The ministers of Christ are under his special care and protection. It is the honour of God that he knows the number of the stars, calls them by their names, binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion; and it is the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the ministers of the gospel, who are greater blessings to the church than the stars are to the world, are in his hand; he directs all their motions, he disposes of them into their several orbs, he fills them with light and influence, he supports them, or else they would soon be falling stars; they are instruments in his hand, and all the good they do is done by his hand with them.

2. *He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks*. This speaks his relation to his churches, as the other his relation to his ministers. Christ is in an intimate manner present and conversant with his churches, he knows and observes their state, he takes pleasure in them, as a man does to walk in his garden; though Christ be in heaven, he walks in the midst of his church on earth, observing what is amiss in them, and what it is they want; and this is a great encouragement to those that have the care of the churches, that the Lord Jesus has graven them upon the palms of his hands.

2. The contents of the epistle, in which, as in most of those that follow, we have,

1. The commendation Christ gave this church, ministers and members, which he always brings in, by declaring that he knows their works, and therefore both his commendation and reprehension are to be strictly regarded; for he does not in either speak at a venture, he knows what he says. Now the church of Ephesus is commended,

1. For their diligence in duty, *ver. 2. I know thy works, and thy labour*. This may more immediately relate to the ministry of this church, which has been laborious and diligent. Dignity calls for duty. Those that are stars in Christ's hand, had need to be always in motion dispensing light to all about them. *For my name's sake thou hast laboured and hast not fainted*, *ver. 3*. Christ keeps an account of every day's work, and every hour's

work his servants do for him, and their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

2. For their patience in suffering, *ver. 2. Thy labour and thy patience*. It is not enough that we be diligent, but we must be patient, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. Ministers must have and exercise great patience, and no Christian can be without it. There must be bearing patience to endure the injuries of men and the rebukes of providence, and there must be waiting patience, that when they have done the will of God they may receive the promise: *Thou hast born, and hast patience*, *ver. 3*. We shall meet with such difficulties in our way and work, as requires patience to go on and finish well.

3. For their zeal against what was evil, *ver. 2. Thou canst not bear them that are evil*. Where observe, it consists very well with Christian patience not to dispense with sin, much less allow it; though we must shew all meekness to men, yet we must shew a just zeal against their sins. This their zeal was the more to be commended, because it was according to knowledge, discreet zeal upon a previous trial made, of the pretences, practices, and tenets of evil men. *Thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not; and hast found them liars*. True zeal proceeds with discretion: none should be cast off till they be tried. Some were risen up in this church that pretended to be not ordinary ministers but apostles; their pretensions had been examined, and found to be vain and false; those that impartially search after truth, may come to the knowledge of it.

2. The rebuke given to this church, *ver. 4. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee*. Those that have much good in them, may have something much amiss in them; and our Lord Jesus as an impartial master and judge takes notice of both; though he first observes what is good, and is most ready to mention that, yet he also observes what is amiss, and will faithfully reprove them for it. The sin that Christ charged this church with, is their decay and declension in holy love and zeal. *Thou hast left thy first love*; not left and forsaken the object of it, but lost the fervent degree of it that at first appeared.

Observe, 1. The first affections of men towards Christ, and holiness, and heaven, are usually lively and warm. God remembered the love of Israel's espousals when she should follow him whithersoever he went. 2. These lively affections will abate and cool, if great care be not taken, and diligence used to preserve them in constant exercise. 3. That Christ is grieved and displeased with his people when he sees them grow remiss and cold towards him, and he will one way or other make them sensible that he does not take it well from them.

3. The advice and counsel given them from Christ, *ver. 5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, &c.* 1. *Those that have lost their first love, must remember from whence they are fallen*; they must compare their present with their former state, and consider how much better it was with them then than now; how much peace, strength, purity, and pleasure they have lost, *by leaving their first love*; how much more comfortably they could lie down and sleep at night; how much more cheerfully they could awake in the morning; how much better they could bear afflictions, and how much more becomingly they could enjoy the favours of providence; how much easier the thoughts of death were to them, and how much stronger their desires and hopes of heaven. 2. They must repent, they must be inwardly grieved and ashamed for their sinful declining; they must blame themselves, and shame themselves for it, and humbly confess it in the sight of God, and judge and condemn themselves for it. 3. They must return and do their first works; they must as it were begin again, go back step by step, till they come to the place where they took the first false step; they must endeavour to revive and recover their first zeal, tenderness, and seriousness, and must pray as earnestly, and watch as diligently as they did when they first set out in the ways of God. Now this good advice is forced and urged, 1. By a severe threatening if it should be neglected. *I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place*. If the presence of Christ's grace and Spirit be slighted, we may expect the presence of his displeasure; he will come in a way of judgment, and that suddenly and surprisingly upon impenitent churches and sinners, he will unchurch them, take away his gospel, his ministers, and his ordinances from them; and what will the churches or the angels of the churches do when the gospel is removed?

2. By an encouraging mention that is made of what was yet good among them, *ver. 6. This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate*. Though thou hast declined in thy love to what is good, yet thou retainest thy hatred to what is evil, especially to what is grossly so. The Nicolaitans were a loose sect, that sheltered themselves under the name of Christianity; they held hateful doctrines, and they were guilty of hateful deeds, hateful to Christ, and to all true Christians; and it is mentioned to the praise of the church of Ephesus, that they had a just zeal and abhorrence of those wicked doctrines and practices. An indifference of spirit between truth and error, good and evil, may be called charity and meekness, but it is not pleasing unto Christ. Our Saviour subjoins this kind commendation to his severe threatening, to make the advice more effectual.

3. We have the conclusion of this epistle, in which as in those that follow, we have, 1. A call to attention; *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*.

Observe, 1. What is written in the scriptures is spoken by the Spirit of God. 2. What is said to one church concerns all the churches, in every place and age. 3. We can never employ our faculty of hearing better than in hearkening to the word of God, and we deserve to lose it, if we do not employ it to this purpose: and they that will not hear the call of God now, will wish at length they had never had a capacity of hearing any thing at all. 2. A promise of great mercy to those that overcome. The Christian life is a warfare against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. It is not enough that we engage in this warfare, but we must pursue it to the end; we must never yield to our spiritual enemies, but fight the good fight, till we gain the victory, as all persevering Christians shall do, and the warfare and victory shall have a glorious triumph and reward. That which is here promised is to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. They shall have that perfection of holiness, and that confirmation therein that Adam should have had; if he had gone well through the course of his trial, then he should have eaten of the tree of life that was in the midst of paradise, and that would have been the sacrament of confirmation to him in his holy and happy state. So all that persevere in their Christian trial and warfare, shall derive from Christ as the tree of life, perfection and confirmation in holiness and happiness in the paradise of God; not in the earthly paradise, but the heavenly, *chap. xxii. 1, 2*.

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna, write, These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. 9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews; and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. 10. Fear none of

of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death.

We now proceed to the second epistle sent to another of the Asian churches, where, as before, observe,

1. The preface or inscription in both parts.

1. The superscription, telling us to whom it was more expressly and immediately directed. *To the angel of the church in Smyrna, a place well known at this day by our merchants, a city of great trade and wealth, perhaps the only city of all the seven that is still known by the same name, but now no longer a Christian church, but over-run with Mahometanism.*

1. The superscription, containing another of the glorious titles of our Lord Jesus, *the first and the last, he that was dead and is alive*, taken out of chap. i. 17, 18. 1. Jesus is the first and the last. It is but a little scantling of time that is allowed to us in this world, but our redeemer is *the first and the last*. He is the first, for by him all things were made; and he was before all things with God, and was God himself. He is the last, for all things are made for him, and he will be judge of all. This surely is the title of God from everlasting and to everlasting, and it is the title of one that is an unchangeable mediator between God and man, Jesus, the same yesterday, to day and for ever. He was the first, for by him the foundation of the church was laid in the patriarchal state. And he is the last, for by him the top-stone will be brought forth and laid in the end of time. 2. He was dead, and is alive. He was dead and died for our sins. He is alive, for he rose again for our justification, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. He was dead, and by dying purchased salvation for us; he is alive, and by his life applies this salvation to us. And if when we were enemies we are reconciled by his death, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. His death we commemorate every sacrament-day, his resurrection and life every sabbath day.

2. The subject matter of this epistle to Smyrna, where after the common declaration of Christ's omniscience, and that perfect cognisance he has of all the works of men, and especially of his churches, he takes notice,

1. Of the improvement they had made in their spiritual state. This comes in, in a short parenthesis, but it is very emphatical; *but thou art rich*, ver. 9. Poor in temporals, but rich in spirituals; poor in spirit, and yet rich in grace; their spiritual riches are set off by their outward poverty. Many that are rich in temporals are poor in spirituals. Thus it was with the church of Laodicea. Some that are poor outwardly, are inwardly rich. Rich in faith, in good works, rich in privileges, rich in bonds and deeds of gift, rich in hope, rich in revelation. Spiritual riches are usually the reward of great diligence; the diligent hand makes rich. Where there is spiritual plenty, outward poverty may be better born; and when God's people are impoverished in temporals for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he uses to make all up to them in spiritual riches, which are much more satisfying and enduring.

2. Of their sufferings. *I know thy tribulation and thy poverty*. The persecution they underwent, even to the spoiling of their goods. They that will be faithful to Christ, must expect to go through many tribulations, but Jesus Christ takes particular notice of all their troubles; in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and he will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, but to them that are troubled rest with himself.

3. He knows the wickedness and the falsehood of their enemies. *I know the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, but are not*; and that is, 1. Of those that pretend to be the only peculiar covenant people of God, as the Jews boasted themselves to be, even after God had rejected them: Or, 2. Of those that would be setting up the Jewish rites and ceremonies, that were now not only antiquated, but abrogated; these may say, they only are the church of God in the world, when, indeed, they are the synagogue of Satan. Observe, 1. That as Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, so the devil has his synagogue; those assemblies that are set up in opposition to the truths of the gospel, and that promote and propagate damnable errors, those that are set up in opposition to the purity and spirituality of gospel worship, and promote and propagate the vain inventions of men, and rites and ceremonies which never entered into the thoughts of God, and those assemblies which are set up to revile and persecute the true worship and worshippers of God, these are all synagogues of Satan, he presides over them, he works in them, his interests are served by them, and he receives an horrid homage and honour from them. 2. For the synagogues of Satan to give themselves out to be the church of Israel of God, is no less than blasphemy; God is greatly dishonoured when his name is made use of to promote and patronise the interests of Satan, and he has an high resentment of this blasphemy, and will take a just revenge on those that persist in it.

4. He foreknows the future trials of his people, and forewarns them of them, and forearms them against them. 1. He forewarns them of future trials, ver. 10. *The devil shall cast some of you into prison and you shall have tribulation*. The people of God must look for a series and succession of troubles in this world, and their troubles usually rise higher, they had been impoverished by their tribulations before, now they must be imprisoned. Observe, It is the devil that stirs up his instruments, wicked men, to persecute the people of God; tyrants and persecutors are the devil's tools, though they gratify their own sinful malignity, and know not that they are actuated by a diabolical malice. 2. Christ forearms them against these approaching troubles: (1.) By his counsel, *fear none of those things*; this is not only a word of command, but of efficacy, not only forbidding slavish fear, but subduing it, and furnishing the soul with strength and courage. (2.) By shewing them how their sufferings would be alleviated and limited. 1. They should not be universal; it would be some of them, not all, that should be cast into prison; those that were best able to bear it, and might expect to be visited and comforted by the rest. 2. They were not to be perpetual but for a set time, and a short time, *ten days*; it should not be everlasting tribulation, the time shall be shortened for the elect's sake. 3. It should be to try them, not to destroy them; that their faith and patience and courage might be proved and improved, and be found to honour and glory. (3.) By proposing and promising a glorious reward to their fidelity, ver. 10. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*.

Observe, 1. The sureness of the reward, *I will give thee*: he hath said it that is able to do it, and he has undertaken that he will do it; they shall have the reward from his own hand, and none of their enemies shall be able to wrest it out of his hand, or to pull it from their heads.

2. The suitableness of it; 1. A crown to reward their poverty, and their fidelity, and their conflict. 2. A crown of life to reward those that are faithful even unto death, are faithful till they die, and that part with life itself in fidelity to Christ; that life so worn out in his service, or laid down

in his cause, shall be rewarded with another, and a much better life that shall be eternal.

3. The conclusion of this message, and that, as before, 1. With a call to universal attention, that all men, all the world should hear what passes between Christ and his churches, how he commends them, how he comforts them, how he reproves their failures, how he rewards their fidelity; it concerns all the inhabitants of the world to observe God's dealings with his own people, all the world may learn instruction and wisdom thereby. 2. With a gracious promise to the conquering Christian, ver. 11. *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death*. Observe, 1. That there is not only a first, but a second death; a death after the body is dead. 2. This second death is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the dying pangs and agonies of it, which are the agonies of the soul; without any mixture of support, and in the duration, it is eternal death, dying the death, to die, and to be always dying; this is hurtful indeed, it is fatally hurtful to all that fall under it. 3. From this hurtful, this destructive death, Christ will save all his faithful servants; the second death, shall have no power over those that are partakers of the first resurrection; the first death shall not hurt them, and the second death shall have no power over them.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write, These things saith he, which hath the sharp sword with two edges, 13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. 14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.

Here also we are to consider, (1.) The inscription of this message. 1. Who it was sent to: *To the angel of the church of Pergamos*. Whether this was a city raised up out of the ruins of old Troy, a Troy novant, as our London was once called, or some other city of the same name, is neither certain nor material; it was a place where Christ had called and constituted a gospel church by the preaching of the gospel, and the grace of his Spirit making the word effectual. 2. Who it was that sent this message to Pergamos, the same Jesus who here describes himself as one that *hath the sharp sword with two edges*, chap. i. 18. *out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*.

Some have observed, that in the several titles of Christ which are prefixed to the several epistles, there is something suited to the state of those churches; as in that to Ephesus, what could be more proper to awaken and recover a drowsy and declining church, than to hear Christ speaking us one that *held the stars in his hand*, and *walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks*, &c.

The church of Pergamos was infested with men of corrupt minds, that did what they could to corrupt both the faith and manners of the church, and Christ being resolved to fight against them by the sword of his word, takes the title of him that *hath the sharp sword with two edges*. 1. The word of God is a sword, it is a weapon both offensive and defensive, it is in the hand of God able to slay both sin and sinners. 2. It is a sharp sword, no heart so hard but it is able to wound it, no knot so closely tied but it is able to cut it; it can divide asunder between the soul and the spirit, that is between the soul and those sinful habits that by custom are become another soul, or seem to be essential to it. 3. It is a sword with two edges, it turns and cuts every way; there is the edge of the law against the transgressors of that dispensation, and the edge of the gospel against the despisers of that dispensation; there is an edge to make a wound, and an edge to open a festered wound in order to its healing; there is no escaping the edge of this sword; if ye turn aside to the right hand it has an edge on that side; if on the left hand, you fall upon the edge of the sword on that side; it turns every way.

(2.) From the inscription we proceed to the contents of this epistle, in which the method is much the same that is observed in the rest. Here,

1. Christ takes notice of the trials and difficulties this church encountered with, ver. 13. *I know thy works and where thou dwellest*, &c. The works of God's servants are best known, when their circumstances; under which they did those works, are duly considered; now that circumstance which added very much lustre to the good works of this church, was the circumstance of the place where this church was planted, a place where Satan's seat was: as our great Lord takes notice of all the advantage and opportunities we have for duty by the place where we dwell, so he takes notice of all the temptations and discouragements we meet with from the places where we dwell, and makes gracious allowances for them: this people dwelt where Satan's seat was, where he kept his court, his circuit is throughout the world, his seat is in some places that are infamous for wickedness, error and cruelty; some think, the Roman governor in this city was a violent enemy to the Christians, and the seat of persecution is Satan's seat.

2. He commends their steadfastness, ver. 13. *Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith*. These two expressions are much of the same sense, it may be the former may signify the effect, and the latter the cause or means. 1. *Thou holdest fast my name*, thou art not ashamed of thy relation to me, but accountest it thine honour that my name is named on thee, that as the wife bears the name of the husband, so thou art called by my name; this thou holdest fast, as thine honour and privilege. 2. That which has made thee thus faithful, is the grace of faith; thou hast not denied the great doctrines of the gospel, nor departed from the Christian faith, and by that means thou hast been kept faithful; and indeed our faith will have a great influence upon our faithfulness; men that deny the faith of Christ, may boast very much of their sincerity and faithfulness to God and conscience; but it has been seldom known that those who let go the true faith retain their fidelity; usually on that rock on which men make shipwreck of their faith, they make shipwreck of a good conscience too: and here our blessed Lord

Lord aggrandises the fidelity of this church from the circumstances of the times, as well as of the place where they lived; they had been steadfast even in those days where Antippos his faithful martyr was slain among them, who this person was, and whether there be any thing mysterious in his name, we have no certain account; he was a faithful disciple of Christ, he suffered martyrdom for it, and sealed his faith and fidelity with his blood in the place where Satan dwelt; and though the rest of the believers there knew this and saw it, yet they were not discouraged nor drawn away from their steadfastness; this is mentioned as an addition to their honour.

3. He reproves them for their sinful failures, *ver. 14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, &c. and them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* There were some that taught it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and that simple fornication was no sin; they, by an impure worship, drew men into impure practices, as Balaam did the Israelites. Observe, 1. *The filthiness of the spirit, and the filthiness of the flesh* often go together; corrupt doctrines and a corrupt worship often lead to a corrupt conversation. 2. That it is very lawful to fix the name of the leaders of any heresy upon those that follow them, it is the shortest way of telling whom we mean. 3. That to continue in communion with persons of corrupt principles and practices, is displeasing to God, draws a guilt and blame upon the whole society; they become partakers of other mens sins; though the church, as such, has no power to punish the persons of men, either for heresy or immorality, with corporal penalties; yet they have power to exclude them from their holy communion; and if they do not so, Christ, the head and lawgiver of the church, will be displeased with them.

4. He calls them to repentance, *ver. 16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, &c.* Observe here, 1. Repentance is the duty of saints as well as sinners; it is a gospel duty. 2. It is the duty of churches and communities, as well as particular persons; they that sin together, should repent together. 3. It is the duty of Christian societies to repent of other mens sins, as far as they have been accessory to them, though but so much as by connivance. 4. When God comes to punish the corrupt members of a church, he rebukes that church itself for allowing such to continue in its communion, and some drops of the storm fall upon the whole society. 5. That no sword cuts so deep, nor inflicts so mortal a wound, as the sword of Christ's mouth; let but the threatenings of the word be set home upon the conscience of a sinner, and he will soon be a terror to himself; and let these threatenings be executed, and the sinner is utterly cut off; the word of God will take hold of sinners sooner or later, either for their conviction or confusion.

(3.) We have the conclusion of this epistle, where, after the usual demand of universal attention, there is the promise of great favour to those that overcome, *ver. 17. They shall eat of the hidden manna, and have the new name, and the white stone, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.* 1. *The hidden manna*, the influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with him, coming down from heaven into the soul, from time to time, for his support, to let him taste something how saints and angels live in heaven; this is hidden from the rest of the world; a stranger intermeddles not with this joy; and it is laid up in Christ, the ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies. 2. *The white stone, with a new name engraven upon it*; this white stone is absolution from the guilt of sin, alluding to the ancient custom of giving a white stone to those acquitted on trial, and a black stone to those condemned; the new name is the name of adoption; adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were adopted; none can read the evidence of a man's adoption but himself; he cannot always read it; but, if he persevere, he shall have both the evidence of sonship and the inheritance.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira, write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brags; 19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. 20. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. 22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, As many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden. 25. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. 26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27. (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers) even as I received of my Father. 28. And I will give him the morning star. 29. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The form of each epistle is very much the same, and in this, as the rest, we have to consider the inscription, contents, and conclusion.

(1.) The inscription telling us,

1. To whom it is directed, to the angel of the church of Thyatira, a city of the proconsular Asia, bordering upon Mysia on the north, and Lydia on the south, a town of trade; from whence came the woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, who being at Philippi in Macedonia, probably, about the business of her calling, heard Paul preach there, and God opened her heart, that she attended to the things that were spoken, and believed, and was baptized; and entertained Paul and Silas there; whether it was by her means that the gospel was brought into her own city Thyatira is not certain, but that it was there, and successful to the forming a gospel church, this epistle assures us.

2. To whom it was sent, by the Son of God, who is here described as

having eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like as fine brags; his general title is here the Son of God, that is, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, which denotes that he has the same nature with the Father, but with a distinct and subordinate manner of subsistence: The description we have here of him is in two characters: 1. That his eyes are like unto a flame of fire signifying his piercing, penetrating, perfect knowledge, a thorough insight into all persons, and all things; one who searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men, *ver. 13.* and will make all the churches to know he does so. 2. That his feet are like fine brags, that the outgoings of his providence are steady, awful, and all pure and holy; as he judges with perfect wisdom, so he acts with perfect strength and steadiness.

(2.) The contents, or subject matter of this epistle, which, as the rest, includes.

1. The honourable character and commendation Christ gives of this church, ministry, and people; and this given by one who was no stranger to them, but well acquainted with them, and with the principles from which they acted: Now in this church Christ makes honourable mention, 1. Of their charity, either more general, a disposition to do good to all men, or more special, to the household of faith; there is no religion where there is no charity. 2. Their service, their ministration; this respects chiefly the officers of the church, who had laboured in the word and doctrine. 3. Their faith, which was the grace that actuated all the rest, both their charity, and their service. 4. Their patience; for those that are most charitable to others, most diligent in their places, and most faithful, must yet expect to meet with that which will exercise their patience. 5. Their growing fruitfulness; their last works were better than the first; this is an excellent character, when others had left their love, and lost their first zeal, these were growing wiser and better; it should be the ambition and earnest desire of all Christians, that their last works may be their best works, that they may be better and better every day, and best at last.

2. A faithful reproof for what was amiss; and this is not so directly charged upon the church itself, as upon some wicked seducers that were among them; the church's fault was, that she connived too much at them; these wicked seducers are compared to Jezebel, and called by her name; Jezebel was a persecutor of the prophets of the Lord, and a great patroness of idolaters and false prophets; the sin of these seducers was, they attempted to draw the servants of God into fornication, and to offer sacrifices to idols; they called themselves prophets, and so would claim a superior authority and regard to the ministers of that church: Two things aggravated the sin of these seducers, who being one in their spirit and design, are spoken of as one person: 1. They made use of the name of God to oppose the truth of his doctrine and worship, this very much aggravated their sin. 2. They abused the patience of God to harden themselves in their wickedness; God gave them space for repentance but they repented not. Observe, 1. Repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin. 2. Repentance requires time, a course of time, and time convenient; it is a great work, and a work of time. 3. Where God gives space for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance. 4. Where the space for repentance is lost, the sinner perishes with a double destruction.

Now why should the wickedness of this Jezebel be charged upon the church of Thyatira? Why, because that church suffered her to seduce the people of that city. But how could they help it? they had not, as a church, civil power to banish or imprison her; but they had ministerial power to censure and to excommunicate her; and it is probable, that neglecting to use the power they had, made them sharers in her sin.

2. The punishment of this seducer, this Jezebel, *ver. 22, 23.* in which is couched a prediction of the fall of Babylon: 1. I will cast her into a bed, into a bed of pain, not of pleasure, into a bed of flames, and they that have sinned with her shall suffer with her; but this may yet be prevented by their repentance.

2. I will kill her children with death, that is, the second death, which does the work effectually, and leaves no hope for future life, no resurrection for those that are killed by the second death, but only to shame and everlasting contempt.

3. The design of Christ in the destruction of these wicked seducers, and that was the instruction of others, especially of his churches: All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works: God is known by the judgments that he executeth; and, by this revenge taken upon seducers, he would make known, 1. His infallible knowledge of the hearts of men, of their principles, designs, frame, and temper; their formality, their indifference, their secret inclinations to symbolize with idolaters. His impartial justice, in giving every one according to his work, that the names of Christians should be no protection, that their churches should be no sanctuaries for sin and sinners.

4. The encouragement given to those that kept themselves pure and undefiled. *ver. 24. But to you I say and to the rest, &c.* Observe, 1. What these seducers called their doctrines, depths, profound mysteries, amusing the people, and endeavouring to persuade them that they had a deeper insight into religion, than their own ministers had attained to. 2. What Christ called them, depths of Satan, satanical delusion and devices, diabolical mysteries; for there is a mystery of iniquity, as well as the great mystery of godliness; it is a dangerous thing to despise the mystery of God, and it is as dangerous to receive the mysteries of Satan. 3. How tender Christ is of his faithful servants, *ver. 25. I will lay upon you no other burden; but that which you have already, hold fast till I come;* I will not overburden your faith with any new mysteries, nor your consciences with any new laws; I only require your attention to what you have received; hold that fast till I come: and I desire no more; Christ is coming to put an end to all the temptations of his people; and if they hold fast faith and a good conscience till he comes, all the difficulty and danger is over.

(3.) We now come to the conclusion of this message, *ver. 26, 27, 28, 29.* where you have, (1.) The promise of an ample reward to the persevering, victorious believer, in two parts: 1. Very great power and dominion over the rest of the world; power over the nations; which may refer either to the time when the empire should turn Christian, and the world be under the government of the Christian emperor, as in Constantine's time; or to the other world, when believers shall sit down with Christ on his throne of judgment, and join with him in trying and condemning and consigning over to punishment the enemies of Christ and the church; The upright shall have dominion in the morning. 2. Knowledge and wisdom, suitable to such power and dominion; I will give him the morning-star: Christ is the morning-star, he brings day with him into the soul, the light of grace and of glory; and he will give his people that perfection of light and wisdom, that is requisite to that state of dignity and dominion that they shall have in the morning of the resurrection. (2.) This epistle ends with the usual demand of attention: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto churches. In the foregoing epistles, this demand of attention comes before the concluding promise; but in this, and all that follow, it comes after; and tells us, that we should all attend to the promises, as well as to the precepts that Christ delivers to the churches.

C H A P. III.

Here we have three more of the epistles of Christ to the churches: 1. To Sardis, ver. 1—7. 2. To Philadelphia, ver. 7—14. 3. To Laodicea, ver. 14. to the end of the chapter.

1. **A**ND unto the angel of the church in Sardis, write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Here, 1. The preface, shewing, (1.) To whom this letter is directed, to the angel of the church of Sardis, an ancient city of Lydia, on the banks of the mountain Tmolus, said to have been the chief city of Asia the Less, and the first city in that part of the world that was converted by the preaching of St. John; and, some say, the first that revolted from Christianity, and one of the first that was laid in its ruins, in which it still lies, without any church or ministry.

(2.) By whom this message was sent, the Lord Jesus, who here assumes the character of him that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; taken out of chap. i. 4. where the seven Spirits are said to be before the throne. 1. He hath the seven Spirits, that is, the holy Spirit with his various powers, graces, and operations, for he is personally one, though efficaciously various; and may be said here to be seven, which is the number of the churches, and of the angels of the churches, to shew, that to every minister, and to every church, there is a dispensation and measure of the Spirit given for them to profit withal; a flock of spiritual influence for that minister and church to improve, both for the enlargement and continuance; which measure of the Spirit is not ordinarily withdrawn from them, till they forfeit it by misimprovement; churches have their spiritual stock and fund, as well as particular believers; and this epistle being sent to a languishing ministry and church, therefore they are very fitly put in mind that Christ has the seven spirits, the Spirit without measure, and in perfection, to whom they may apply themselves for the reviving of his work among them. 2. He hath the seven stars, the angels of the churches: they are disposed of by him, and accountable to him; which should make them faithful and zealous: He hath ministers to employ, and spiritual influences to communicate to his ministers for the good of his church; the holy Spirit usually works by the ministry, and the ministry will be of no efficacy without the Spirit, and the same divine hand holds them both.

2. The body of this epistle; and there is this observable in it, that whereas in the other epistle Christ begins with commending what was good in the churches, and then proceeds to tell them what was amiss, in this (and in the epistle to Laodicea) he begins (1.) With a reproof, and a very severe one: *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.* Hypocrisy, and a lamentable decay in religion, are the sins charged upon this church, by one that knew her well, and all her works. 1. This church had gained a great reputation, it had a name, and a very honourable one, for a flourishing church; a name for vital, lively religion, for purity of doctrine, unity among themselves, uniformity in worship, decency and order; we read not of any unhappy divisions among themselves, every thing appeared well, as to what falls under the observation of men. 2. This church was not really what it was reputed to be; they had a name to live, but they were dead: there was a form of godliness, but not the power; a name to live, but not a principle of life; if there was not a total privation of life, yet there was a great deadness in their souls, and in their services; a great deadness in the spirits of their ministers, and a great deadness in their ministrations, in their praying, in their preaching, in their converse; and a great deadness in the people in hearing, in prayer, and in conversation; what little life was yet left among them, was, in a manner, expiring, ready to die. (2.) Our Lord proceeds to give this degenerate church the best advice, ver. 2. *Be watchful and strengthen the things, &c.* 1. He advises them to be on their watch; the cause of their sinful deadness and declension was, that they had let down their watch; whenever we are off our watch we lose ground; and therefore must return to our watchfulness against sin and Satan, and whatever is destructive to the life and power of godliness. 2. *To strengthen the things that remain, and that are ready to die.* Some understand this of persons, there were some few that had retained their integrity, but they were in danger of declining with the rest: It is a difficult thing to keep up to the life and power of godliness ourselves, when we see an universal deadness and declension prevailing round about us. Or it may be understood of practices as it follows. *I have not found thy works perfect before God, not filled up; there is something wanting in them; there is the shell, but not the kernel; there is the carcase, but not the soul; the shadow, but not the substance; the inward thing is wanting, thy works are hollow and empty; prayers are not filled up with holy desires, almsdeeds not filled up with true charity, sabbaths not filled up with suitable devotion of soul to God; there are not inward affections suitable to outward acts and expressions; now when the spirit is wanting, the form cannot long subsist.* 3. *To recollect themselves, and remember how they have received and heard, ver. 3.* not only to remember what they had received and heard, what messages they had received from God, what tokens of his mercy and favour towards them, what sermons they had heard, but how they had received and heard, what impressions the mercies of God had made upon their souls at first, what affections they felt working under the word and ordinances, the love of their espousals, the kindness of the youth, how welcome the gospel and the grace of God were to them when they first received them; where is the blessedness they then spoke of? 4. *To hold fast what they had received, that they might not lose all, and repent sincerely that they had lost so much of the life of religion, and had run the risk of losing all.*

3. Christ enforces his counsel with dreadful threatening in case it should be despised, ver. 3. *I will come unto thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour.* Observe, 1. When Christ leaves a people as to his gracious presence, he comes to them in judgment, and his judicial presence will be very dreadful to those that have sinned away his gracious presence. 2. His judicial approach to a dead declining people will be very surprising; their deadness will keep them in security, and, as it procures an angry visit from Christ to them, it will prevent their discerning it, and preparing for it. 3. Such a visit from Christ will be to their loss, he will come as a thief to strip them of their remaining enjoyments and mercies, not by fraud, but in justice and righteousness, taking the forfeiture they have made of all to him.

4. Our blessed Lord does not leave this sinful people without some comfort and encouragement; in the midst of judgment he remembers mercy, ver. 4. and here, 1. He makes honourable mention of the faithful remnant in Sardis, though but small: *Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments;* had not given into the prevailing corruptions and pollution of the day and place in which they lived: God takes notice of the smallest number of those who abide with him, and the fewer they are; the more precious in his sight. 2. He makes a very gracious promise to them: *they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy;* in the stole, the white robes of justification and adoption, and comfort; or in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world; *they shall walk with Christ in the pleasant walks of the heavenly paradise;* and what delightful converse will there be between Christ and them when they thus walk together? And this is an honour proper and suitable to their integrity, and which their fidelity has prepared them for, and which it is no way unbecoming Christ to confer upon them; though it is not a legal, but a gospel worthiness that is ascribed to them; not merit, but meekness; *they that walk with Christ in the clean garments of real practical holiness here, and keep themselves unspotted from the world, shall walk with Christ in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world;* this is a suitable reward.

(3.) We now come to the conclusion of this epistle, in which, as before, we have, 1. A great reward promised to the conquering Christian, ver. 5. and it is very much the same with what has been already mentioned: *He that overcometh, shall be clothed in white raiment;* the purity of grace shall be rewarded with the perfect purity of glory; holiness when perfected, shall be its own reward; glory is the perfection of grace, differing not in kind, but in degree; now to this is added another promise very suitable to the case; *I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* Observe, 1. Christ has his book of life, a register and roll of all that shall inherit eternal life. (1.) The book of eternal election: (2.) The book of remembrance of all those that have lived to God, and have kept up the life and power of godliness in evil times. 2. Christ will not blot the names of his chosen and faithful ones out of this book of life; men may be enrolled in the registers of the church, as baptized, as making a profession, as having a name to live, and that name may come to be blotted out of the roll, when it appears it was but a name, a name to live, without spiritual life; such oftentimes lose the very name before they die, they are left to God to blot out their own names by their gross and open wickedness, but the names of those that overcome shall never be blotted out. 3. Christ will produce this book of life, and confess the names of the faithful that stand there before God and all the angels; he will do this as their judge, when the books shall be opened; he will do that as their captain and head, leading them with him triumphantly to heaven, presenting them to the Father: *Behold me and the children that thou hast given me:* How great will this honour and reward be! 2. The demand of universal attention finches the message; every word from God deserves attention from men; that which may seem more particularly directed to one body of men, has something in it instructive to all.

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth: 8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan (which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie) behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12. Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

We are now come to the sixth letter sent to one of the Asian churches; where observe,

2. The inscription, shewing, 1. For whom it was more immediately designed, the angel of the church of Philadelphia: this also was a city in the Lesser Asia, seated upon the borders of Mysia and Lydia, and had its name from that brotherly love for which it was eminent: We can hardly suppose that this name was given to it after it had received the Christian religion, and that it was so called from that Christian affection that all believers have, and should have one for another, as the children of one Father, and the brethren of Christ; but rather that it was its ancient name, on the account of that love and kindness which the citizens had, and shewed to each other as a civil fraternity; which was an excellent spirit, and when sanctified by the grace of the gospel, would render them an excellent church, as indeed they were, for here is no one fault found with this church, and yet, doubtless, there were faults in it of common infirmity; but love covers such faults. 3. By whom this letter was signed, even by the same Jesus who is alone the universal head of all the churches; and here observe by what title he chooses to represent himself to this church, viz. *he that is holy, he that is true,*

true; he that hath the key of David, &c. you have his personal character, he that is holy, and he that is true; holy in his nature, and therefore cannot but be true to his word, for he hath spoken in his holiness; and you have also his political character, he hath the key of David, he openeth and no man shutteth, &c. the key of the house of David, the key of government and authority in and over the church.

Where, (1.) Observe the acts of his government: 1. *He opens*: He opens a door of opportunity to the churches, he opens a door of utterance to his ministers, he opens a door of entrance, opens the heart, he opens a door of admission into the visible church, laying down the terms of communion, and he opens the door of admission into the church triumphant, according to the terms of salvation fixed by him. 2. *He shuts* the door; when he pleases, he shuts the door of opportunity, and the door of utterance, and leaves obstinate sinners shut up in the hardness of their hearts; and shuts the door of church-fellowship against unbelievers and profane persons, and he shuts the door of heaven against the foolish virgins that have slept away their day of grace, and against the workers of iniquity, how vain and confident soever they may be.

(2.) The way and manner in which he performs these acts, and that is absolute sovereignty, independent upon the will of men, and irresistible by the power of men; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth and no man opens; he works to will and to do, and when he works none can let. These were proper characters for him, when speaking to a church that had endeavoured to be conformed to Christ in holiness and truth, and that had enjoyed a wide door of liberty and opportunity under his care and government.

2. The subject matter of this epistle; where, (1.) Christ puts them in mind of what he had done for them, *ver. 8. I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*: I have set it open, and kept it open, though there be many adversaries. Learn here, 1. Christ is to be acknowledged as the author of all the liberty and opportunity his churches enjoy. 2. He takes notice, and keeps account, how long he has preserved their spiritual liberties and privileges for them. 3. That wicked men envy the people of God their door of liberty, and would be glad to shut it against them. 4. That if we do not provoke Christ to shut this door against us, men cannot do it.

(2.) This church is commended, *ver. 8. Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name*. In this there seems to be couched a gentle reproof, *Thou hast a little strength*, a little grace, which though it be not proportionate to the wide door of opportunity which I have opened to thee, yet is true grace, and has kept thee faithful. True grace, though weak, has the divine approbation; but though Christ accepts a little strength, yet believers should not rest satisfied in a little, but should strive to grow in grace, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. True grace, though weak, will do more than the greatest gifts or highest degrees of common grace, for it will enable the Christian to keep the word of Christ, and not to deny his name: Obedience, fidelity, and a free confession of the name of Christ, are the fruits of true grace, and are pleasing to Christ as such.

(3.) Here is a promise of the great favours God would bestow on this church, *ver. 9, 10*. This favour consists in two things; 1. Christ would make this church's enemies subject to her: (1.) Those enemies are described to be such as said *they were Jews, but lied* in saying so; pretended to be the only and peculiar people of God, but were really the synagogue of Satan: Assemblies that worship God in spirit and in truth, are the Israel of God; assemblies that either worship false gods, or the true God in a false manner, are the synagogues of Satan; though they may profess to be the only people of God, their profession is a lie. (2.) Their subjection to the church is described; *they shall worship at thy feet*; not pay a religious and divine honour to the church itself, or to the ministry of it, but shall be convinced that they have been in the wrong, that this church is in the right, and is beloved of Christ, and they shall desire to be taken into communion with her, and that they may worship the same God after the same manner; and how shall this great change be wrought? by the power of God upon the hearts of his enemies, and by signal discoveries of his peculiar favour to his church; *they shall know that I have loved thee*. Observe, 1. The greatest honour and happiness any church can enjoy, is the peculiar love and favour of Christ. 2. Christ can discover this his favour to his people in such a manner as that their very enemies shall see it, and be forced to acknowledge it. 3. That this will, by the grace of Christ, soften the hearts of their enemies, and make them desirous to be admitted into communion with them.

2. Another instance of favour that Christ promises to this church, is preserving grace in the most trying times, *ver. 10*. and this as the reward of their past fidelity; *to him that hath, shall be given*. Here observe, 1. The gospel of Christ is the word of his patience, it is the fruit of the patience of God to a sinful world, it sets before men the exemplary patience of Christ in all his sufferings for men, it calls those that receive it to the exercise of patience in conformity to Christ. 2. This gospel should be carefully kept by all that enjoy it, they must keep up to the faith and practice, and worship prescribed in the gospel. 3. After a day of patience we must expect an hour of temptation; a day of gospel peace and liberty is a day of God's patience, and it is seldom so well improved as it should be, and therefore often followed by an hour of trial and temptation. 4. Sometimes the trial is more general and universal, it comes upon all the world, and when it is so general, it is usually the shorter. 5. They that keep the gospel in a time of peace, shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation; by keeping the gospel they are prepared for the trial, and the same divine grace that has made them fruitful in times of peace, will make them faithful in times of persecution.

(4.) Christ calls the church to that duty which he before promised he would enable her to do, and that is to persevere, *to hold fast that which she had*. 1. The duty itself; *Hold fast that which thou hast*; that faith, that truth, that strength of grace, that zeal, that love to the brethren; *thou hast* been possessed of this excellent treasure, *hold it fast*. 2. The motives taken from the speedy appearance of Christ; *Behold, I come quickly*: See, I am just a coming to relieve them under the trial, and to reward their fidelity, and to punish those that fall away; they shall lose that crown that they once seemed to have a right to, and that they hoped for, and pleased themselves with the thoughts of; the persevering Christian shall win the prize from backsliding professors, that once stood fair for it.

3. The conclusion of this epistle, *ver. 12, 13*. where, after his usual manner, our Saviour promises a glorious reward to the victorious believer in two things:

(1.) He shall be a monumental pillar in the temple of God; not a pillar to support the temple, heaven needs no such props, but a monument of the free and powerful grace of God, a monument that shall never be defaced or removed, as many stately pillars erected in honour to the Roman emperors and generals are.

(2.) On this monumental pillar there shall be an honourable inscription, as in those cases is usual: *The name of God*, in whose cause he engaged, whom he served, and for whom he suffered in this warfare; *and the name of the city of God*, the church of God, the new Jerusalem, which came down

from heaven; on this pillar shall be recorded all the services the believe did to the church of God, how he asserted her rights, enlarged her borders, maintained her purity and honour; this will be a greater name than Asiaticus, or Africanus; a soldier under God in the wars of the church; and then another part of the inscription is, 2. *The new name of Christ, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation*; by this it will appear under whose banner this conquering believer was lifted, under whose conduct he acted, by whose example he was encouraged, and under whose influence he fought the good fight, and came off victorious. The epistle is closed up with the demand of attention, *he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*, how Christ loves and values his faithful people, how he commends, and how he will crown their fidelity.

14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth: 17. Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked. 18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. 19. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

We are now come to the last and worst of all the seven Asian churches, the reverse of the church of Philadelphia; for as there was nothing reprov'd in that, here is nothing commended in this; and yet this was one of the seven golden candlesticks; for a corrupt church may be still a church here, as before. 1. The inscription, to whom, and for whom: (1.) To whom, to the angel of the church of Laodicea; this was once a famous city near the river Lycus, had a wall of vast compass, and three marble theatres, and, like Rome, was built on seven hills: It seems the apostle Paul was very instrumental in planting the gospel in this city, and from hence he wrote a letter, which he mentions in the epistle to the Colossians, the last chapter, and sends salutations to them, as being not above twenty miles distant from Colosse: In this city was held a council in the fourth century, but it has been long since demolished, and lies in its ruins to this day, an awful monument of the wrath of the Lamb.

(2.) From whom was this message sent; here our Lord Jesus files himself the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. 1. The Amen, one that is steady and unchangeable in all his purposes and promises, which are all yea, and all amen. 2. The faithful and true witness, whose testimony of men to God will be fully believed and regarded, and will be a swift but true witness against all indifferent lukewarm professors. 3. The beginning of the creation of God, either of the first creation, and so he is the beginning that is the first cause, the creator, and the governor of it; or of the second creation, the church; and so he is the head of that body, the first-born from the dead, as it is in chap. i. 5. from whence these titles are taken. Christ having raised up himself by his own divine power, as the head of a new world, raises up dead souls to be a living temple and church to himself.

2. The subject matter; in which observe, 1. The heavy charge drawn up against this church, ministers and people, by one that knew them better than they knew themselves, *ver. 15. Thou art neither cold nor hot*, but worse than either; *I would thou wert cold or hot*. Lukewarmness or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If religion be a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it; if it be not a real thing, it is the vilest imposture, and we should be earnest against it. If religion be worth any thing, it is worth every thing; an indifference here is inexcusable, *Why halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal (be God) follow him*. Here is no room for neutrality. An open enemy shall have fairer quarter than a perfidious neuter; and there is more hope of a heathen than of such. Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for him or against him. 2. A severe punishment threatened, *I will spue thee out of my mouth*. As lukewarm water turns the stomach, and provokes to a vomit, lukewarm professors turn the heart of Christ against them; he is sick of them, and cannot long bear them; they may call their lukewarmness charity, meekness, moderation, and a largeness of soul, it is nauseous to Christ, and makes those so that allow themselves in it; they shall be rejected, and finally rejected; for far be it from the holy Jesus to return to that which has been thus rejected.

3. We have one cause of this indifferency and inconsistency in religion assigned, and that is self-conceit and self-delusion; they thought they were well already, and therefore they were very indifferent whether they grew better or no, *ver. 17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, &c.* Here observe, what a difference there was between the thoughts they had of themselves, and the thoughts that Christ had of them.

1. The high thoughts they had of themselves, *thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*; rich, and growing richer, and increased to that degree, as to be above all want or possibility of wanting. Perhaps they were well provided for as to their bodies, and that made them overlook the necessities of their souls; or they thought themselves well furnished in their souls; they had learning and they took it for religion; they had gifts, and they took them for grace; they had wit, and they took it for true wisdom; they had ordinances, and they took up with them instead of the God of ordinances. How careful should we be not to put the cheat upon our own souls? Doubtless there are many in hell, that once thought themselves to be in the way to heaven. Let us daily beg of God that we may not be left to flatter and deceive ourselves in the concerns of our souls.

2. The mean thoughts that Christ had of them, and he was not mistaken. He knew, though they knew not, that they were wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked; their state was wretched in itself, and such as called for pity and compassion from others; though they were proud of themselves, they were pitied by all that knew their case. For, 1. They were poor, really poor, when they said and thought they were rich; they had no provision for their souls to live upon; their souls were starving in the midst of their abundance; they were vastly in debt to the justice of God, and had nothing to pay off the least part of the debt. 2. They were blind; they could not see their state, nor their way, nor their danger; they could not see into themselves; they could not look before them; they were blind, and yet they thought they saw; the very light that was in them was darkness; and then how great must that darkness be? They could not see Christ, though evidently set forth, and crucified before their eyes; they could not see God by faith, though always present in them; they could not see death, though it was just before them; they could not look into eternity, though they stood upon the very brink of it continually. 3. They were naked, without clothing, and without house and harbour for their souls; they were without clothing, had neither the garment of justification, nor of sanctification; their nakedness both of guilt and pollution had no covering; they lay always exposed to sin and shame; their righteousnesses were but filthy rags; they were rags, and would not cover them; filthy rags, and would defile them; and they were naked, without house or harbour, for they were without God, and he has been the dwelling-place of his people in all ages; in him alone the soul of man can find rest and safety, and all suitable accommodations. The riches of the body will not enrich the soul; the sight of the body will not enlighten the soul; the most convenient house for the body will not afford rest or safety to the soul; the soul is a different thing from the body, and must have accommodation suitable to its nature, or else in the midst of bodily prosperity it will be wretched and miserable. 4. We have good counsel given by Christ to this naughty people, and that is, that they drop their vain and false opinion they had of themselves, and endeavour to be that really which they would seem to be, *ver. 18. I counsel thee to buy of me, &c.* Observe, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ continues to give good counsel to those that have cast his counsel behind their backs. 2. The condition of sinners is never desperate, while they enjoy the gracious calls and counsels of Christ. 3. That our blessed Lord, the counsellor, always gives the best advice, and that which is most suitable to the sinner's case; as here, 1. These people were poor. *Christ counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich*; he lets them know where they might have true riches, and how they might have them: where they might have them, from himself; he leads them not to the streams of Pactolus, nor to the mines of Potosi, but invites them to himself, which is the pearl of price. And how must they have this true gold from him? They must buy it. That seems to be unsaying all again. How can they that are poor buy gold? Why, as they may buy of Christ wine and milk, that is, *without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1.* Something indeed must be parted with, but it is nothing of a valuable consideration, it is only to make room for receiving true riches. Part with sin and self-sufficiency, and come to Christ with a sense of your poverty and emptiness, that you may be filled with his hidden treasure. 2. These people were naked, Christ tells them where they might have clothing, and such as would cover the shame of their nakedness. This they must receive from Christ; and they must only put off their filthy rags, that they might put on the white raiment that he had purchased and provided for them. His own imputed righteousness for justification, and the garments of holiness and sanctification. 3. They were blind, and he counsels them to buy of him eye-salve that they might see; give up their own wisdom and reason, which is but blindness in the things of God, and resign themselves to his word and Spirit; and their eyes shall be opened to see their way and their end, their duty and their true interest; a new and glorious scene would then open itself to their souls; a new world furnished with the most beautiful and excellent objects, and this light would be marvellous to them that were but just now delivered from the powers of darkness. This is the wife and good counsel Christ gives to careless souls, and if they follow it, he will judge himself bound in honour to make it effectual.

5. Here is added great and gracious encouragement to this sinful people to take the admonition and advice well that Christ had given them, *ver. 19, 20.* He tells them, 1. It was given them in true and tender affection, *whom I love, I rebuke and chasten.* You may think I have given you hard words and severe reproofs; it is all out of love to your souls. I would not have thus openly rebuked and corrected your sinful lukewarmness and vain confidence, if I had not been a lover of your souls; had I hated you, I would have let you alone to go on in sin till it had been your ruin. Sinners ought to take the rebuke of God's word and rod as tokens of his good-will to their souls, and should accordingly repent in good earnest, and turn to him that finites them; better are the frowns and wounds of a friend than the flattering smiles of an enemy. 2. That if they would comply with his admonitions, he was ready to make them good to their souls, *ver. 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock, &c.* Here observe, 1. That Christ is graciously pleased by his word and Spirit to come to the door of the heart of sinners; he draws near to them in a way of mercy, ready to make them a kind visit. 2. He finds this door shut against him; the heart of man is by nature shut up against Christ by ignorance, unbelief, sinful prejudices. 3. When he finds the heart shut, he does not immediately withdraw, but he waits to be gracious, even till his head be filled with the dew. 4. He uses all proper means to awaken sinners, and to cause them to open to him; he calls by his word, he knocks by the impulses of his Spirit upon their conscience. 5. They that open to him shall enjoy his presence to their great comfort and advantage; he will sup with them, he will accept of what is good in them, he will eat his pleasant fruit, and he will bring the best part of the entertainment with him; if what he finds would make but a poor feast, what he brings will make up the deficiency; he will give fresh supplies of grace and comforts, and thereby stir up fresh acts of faith, and love, and delight; and in all this Christ and his repenting people will enjoy pleasant communion each with other. Alas! what do careless, obstinate sinners lose by refusing to open the door of the heart to Christ!

3. We now come to the conclusion of this epistle, and here, as before, 1. The promise made to the overcoming believer. It is here implied, that though this church seemed to be wholly over-run and overcome with lukewarmness and self-confidence, yet it was possible that by the reproofs and counsels of Christ they might be inspired with fresh zeal and vigour, and might come off conquerors in their spiritual warfare. 2. That if they did so, all former faults should be forgiven, and they should have a great reward. And what is that reward? *They shall sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne, ver. 21.* Here it is intimated, 1. That Christ himself had met with his temptations and conflicts. 2. That he overcame them all, and was more than a conqueror. 3. That as the reward of his conflict and victory, he is set down with God the Father on his throne, possessed of that glory which he had with the Father from eternity; but which he was pleased very much to conceal on earth; leaving it as it were in the hands of the Father as a

pledge that he would fulfil the work of a Saviour before he re-assumed that manifestative glory; and having done so, then he does *pignus reposcere*, demand the pledge, to appear in his divine glory equal to the Father. 4. That those that are conformed to Christ in his trials and victories shall be conformed to him in his glory; they shall sit down with him on his throne, on his throne of judgment at the end of the world, on his throne of glory to all eternity; shining in his beams by virtue of their union with him, and relation to him, as the mystical body of which he is the head. 2. All is close up with the general demand of attention, *ver. 22.* putting all, to whom these epistles shall come, in mind, that what is contained in them is not of private interpretation, not intended only for the instruction, and reproof, and correction of those particular churches, but of all the churches of Christ in all ages and parts of the world: And as there will be a resemblance in all succeeding churches to these, both in their graces and sins; so they may expect that God will deal with them as he dealt with these, which are patterns to all ages, what faithful and fruitful churches may expect to receive from God, and what those that are unfaithful may expect to suffer from his hand; yea, that God's dealings with his churches may afford useful instruction to the rest of the world, to put them upon considering, if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end of them be that do not obey the gospel of Christ? *1 Pet. iv. 17.* And thus end the messages of Christ to the Asian churches the epistolary part of this book: We now come to the prophetic part.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter the prophetic scene opens; and as the epistolary part opened with a vision of Christ, chap. 1. so this part is introduced with a glorious appearance of the great God, whose throne is in heaven, compassed about with the heavenly host. This discovery was made to John, and in this chapter he, 1. Records the heavenly sight he saw, from *ver. 1—8.* And then, 2. The heavenly songs he heard, from *ver. 8. to the end.*

1. **A**FTER this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard, was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2. And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3. And he that sat, was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment: and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings, and voices: And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

We have here an account of a second vision, with which the apostle John was favoured. After this, that is, not only after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, but after I had taken his messages from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches according to his command, after this I had another vision. Those that well improve the discoveries they have had of God already, are prepared thereby for more, and may expect them. Observe,

1. The preparation made for the apostle's having this vision, 1. *A door was opened in heaven.* Whence we learn, 1. That whatever is transacted on earth, is first designed and settled in heaven; there is the model of all the works of God; all of them are therefore before his eye, and he lets the inhabitants of heaven see as much of them as is fit for them. 2. We can know nothing of future events but what God is pleased to discover to us; they are within the veil, till God opens the door. But, 3. So far as God reveals his designs to us, we may and ought to receive them, and not pretend to be wiser above what is revealed. 2. To prepare John for the vision, *a trumpet was sounded, and he was called up into heaven to have a sight there of the things which were to be hereafter.* He was called into the third heavens. There is a way opened into the holiest of all, into which the sons of God may enter by faith and holy affections now in their spirits when they die, and in their whole persons at the last day. 2. We must not intrude into the secret of God's presence, but stay till we are called up to it. 3. To prepare for this vision the apostle was in the Spirit, he was in a rapture, as before, *chap. i. 10.* Whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell; perhaps he himself could not; however all bodily actions and sensations were for a time suspended, and his spirit was possessed with the spirit of prophecy, and wholly under a divine influence: The more we abstract ourselves from all corporeal things, the more fit we are for communion with God; the body is a veil, a cloud and clog to the mind in its transactions with God. We should as it were forget it when we go in before the Lord in duty, and be willing to drop it, that we may go up to him in heaven. This was the apparatus to the vision. Now observe,

2. The vision itself. And it begins with the strange sights that the apostle saw, and they are such as these. 1. *He saw a throne set in heaven,* the seat of honour, and authority and judgment. Heaven is the throne of God; there he resides in glory, and from thence he gives laws to the church, and to the whole world; and all earthly thrones are under the jurisdiction of this throne that is set in heaven. 2. *He saw a glorious one upon the throne.* This throne was not empty, there was one in it that filled it, and that was God who is here described by those things that are most pleasant and precious in our world; *his countenance was like a jasper and a sardine stone*; he is not described by any human features, so as to be represented by an image, but only by his transcendent brightness. The jasper is a transparent stone, which yet offers to the eye a variety of the most vivid colours, signifying the glorious perfections of God; the sardine stone is red, signifying the justice of God; that essential attribute which he does never divest himself of in favour of any, but does gloriously exert in the government of the world, and

and especially of the church, through our Lord Jesus Christ. This attribute is displayed in pardoning as well as in punishing, in saving as well as in destroying sinners. 3. *He saw a rainbow about the throne like unto an emerald*, ver. 3. The rainbow was the seal and token of the covenant of providence that God made with Noah and his posterity with him, and is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise that God has made with Christ as the head of the church, and all his people in him; which covenant is as the waters of Noah unto God, an everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and sure. This rainbow looked like the emerald; the most prevailing colour was a pleasant green, to shew the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant. 4. *He saw four and twenty seats round about the throne*, not empty, but filled with *four and twenty elders*, presbyters, representing very probably, the whole church of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament state. Not the ministers of the church, but rather the representatives of the people. Their sitting denotes their honour, and their rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne, signifies their relation to God, their nearness to him, the sight and enjoyment they have of him, and their continual regard to him. *They are clothed in white raiment*, the righteousness of the saints, both imputed and inherent; *they had on their heads crowns of gold*, signifying the honour and authority given them of God, and the glory they have with him. All these may in a lower sense be applied to the gospel church on earth, in its worshipping assemblies; and in the higher sense, to the church triumphant in heaven. 5. *He perceived lightnings and voices proceed out of the throne*; that is, the awful declarations that he makes to his church of his sovereign will and pleasure. Thus he gave forth the law on mount Sinai, and the gospel has not less glory and authority than the law, though it be of a more spiritual nature. 6. *He saw seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*, which are explained to be the *seven Spirits of God*, ver. 5. The various gifts and graces, and operations of the Spirit of God in the churches of Christ; these are all dispensed according to the will and pleasure of him that sits upon the throne. 7. *He saw before the throne a sea of glass, like unto crystal*. As in the temple there was a great vessel of brass filled with water, in which the priests were to wash when they went to minister before the Lord; and this was called a sea: So in the gospel-church, the sea or laver for purification is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that cleanses from all sin, even from sanctuary sins. And in this all those must be washed that are admitted into the gracious presence of God on earth, or his glorious presence in heaven. 8. *He saw four animals*, living creatures, between the throne and the circle of the elders (as seems most probable) standing between God and the people; these seem to signify the ministers of the gospel, not only because of this their situation nearer to God, and between him and the elders or representatives of the Christian people, and because fewer in number than the people; but as they are here described, 1. By their many eyes, denoting sagacity, vigilance, and circumspection. 2. By their lion-like courage, their great labour and diligence, in which they resemble the ox; their prudence and discretion, becoming men; and their sublime affections and speculations, by which they mount up *with wings like eagles towards heaven*, ver. 7. and these wings full of eyes within, to shew that in all their meditations and ministrations they are to act with knowledge, and especially should be well acquainted with themselves and the state of their own souls, and see their own concern in the great doctrines and duties of religion, watching over their own souls as well as the souls of the people. 3. By their continual employment, and that is praising God, and not ceasing to do so night and day. The elders sit and are ministered unto, they stand and minister, they rest not night and day. This now leads to the other part of the representation.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him, and *they were full of eyes within*; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever. 10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.

We have considered the sights that the apostle saw in heaven, now let us observe, 2. The songs that he heard, for there is in heaven not only that to be seen that will highly please a sanctified eye, but there is that to be heard that will greatly delight a sanctified ear. It is true concerning the church of Christ here, which is an heaven upon earth, and it will be eminently so in the church made perfect in the heaven of heavens. 1. He heard the song of the four living creatures, of the ministers of the church, which refers to the prophet Esay's vision, chap. vi. And here, 1. They adore one God, the one only, *the Lord God Almighty*, unchangeable and everlasting. 2. They adore three holies in this one God, the holy Father, the holy Son, and the holy Spirit, and these are one infinitely holy and eternal Being, that sits upon the throne, and *lives for ever and ever*. In this glory the prophet saw Christ and spoke of him. 2. He heard the adorations of the *four and twenty elders*, that is, of the Christian people represented by them; the ministers led, and the people followed in the praises of God, ver. 10, 11. Where observe, 1. The object of their worship, the same with that which the ministers adored, *him that sat on the throne*, the eternal, ever-living God. The true church of God has one and the same object of worship: Two different objects of worship, either co-ordinate or subordinate would confound the worship, and divide the worshippers. It is unlawful to join in divine worship with those that either mistake or multiply the object. There is but one God, and he alone as God is worshipped by the church on earth and in heaven. 2. The acts of adoration. 1. *They fell down before him that sat on the throne*; they discovered the most profound humility, reverence, and godly fear. 2. *They cast down their crowns before the throne*; they gave God the glory of that holiness wherewith he had crowned their souls on earth, and that honour and happiness with which he crowns them in heaven: They owe all their graces and all their glories to him, and acknowledge that his crown is infinitely more glorious than theirs, and that it is their glory to be glorifying God. 3. The words of adoration, they said, *thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power*, ver. 11. Observe, 1. They do not say we give thee glory, and honour, and power; for what can any creature pretend to give unto God? but they say, *thou art worthy to receive glory*. 2. In this they tacitly acknowledge, that God was exalted far above all blessing and praise; he was worthy to receive glory, but they were not worthy to praise, nor able to do it according to his infinite excellencies. 3. We have the ground and reason of their adora-

tion, which is threefold. 1. He is the creator of all things, the first cause; and none but the creator of all things should be adored, no made thing can be the object of religious worship. 2. He is the preserver of all things, and his preservation is a continual creation; they are created still by the sustaining power of God; all beings but God are dependant upon the will and power of God, and no dependant being must be set up as an object of religious worship: It is the part of the best dependant beings to be worshippers, not to be worshipped. 3. He is the final cause of all things; *for thy pleasure they are and were created*. It was his will and pleasure to create all things, he was not put upon it by the will of another; there is no such thing as a subordinate creator, that acts under and by the will and power of another; and if there were, he ought not to be worshipped; and as he made all things at his pleasure, he made them for his pleasure, to deal with them as he pleases, and to glorify himself by them one way or other. Though he delights not in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn and live, *yet he hath made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. Now if these be true and sufficient grounds for religious worship, as they are proper to God alone, Christ must needs be God, one with the Father and Spirit, and be worshipped as such; for we find the same casually ascribed to him, Col. i. 16, 17. *All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist*.

C H A P. V.

In the foregoing chapter the prophetic scene was opened, in the sight and hearing of the apostle, and he had a sight of God the creator and ruler of the world, and the great king of the church. He saw God on the throne of glory and government, surrounded with his holy ones, and receiving their adorations. Now the counsels and decrees of God are here set before the apostles, as in a book, which God held in his right hand; and this book is represented, 1. As sealed in the hand of God, from ver. 1—6. 2. As taken into the hand of Christ the redeemer, to be unsealed and opened, from ver. 6. to the end.

1. **A**ND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4. And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Hitherto the apostle had only seen the great God governor of all things; now, 1. He is favoured with a sight of the model and methods of his government, as they are all written down in a book which he holds in his hand; and this we are now to consider as shut up and sealed in the hand of God. Observe, 1. That the designs and methods of divine providence towards the church and the world are stated and fixed; they are resolved upon and agreed to, as that which is written in a book: The great design is laid, every part adjusted, all determined, and every thing passed into decree, and made a matter of record. The original and first draught of this book is the book of God's decrees, laid up in his own cabinet, in his eternal mind: But there is a transcript of so much as was necessary to be known, in the book of the scripture in general; in the prophetic part of scripture especially, and in this prophecy in particular. 2. God holds this book in his right hand, to declare the authority of the book, and his readiness and resolution to execute all the contents thereof, all the counsels and purposes therein recorded. 3. This book in the hand of God is shut up and sealed; it is known to none but himself, till he allows it to be opened. Known unto God, and to him alone, are all his works, from the beginning of the world: but it is his glory to conceal the matter as he pleases: The times and seasons, and their great events, he hath kept in his own hand and power. 4. *It is sealed with seven seals*. This tells us with what inscrutable secrecy the counsels of God are laid, how impenetrable by the eye and intellect of the creature; and also points to us seven several parts of this book of God's counsels; each part seems to have its particular seal, and when opened discovers its proper events; and these seven parts are not unsealed and opened at once, but successively, one scene of providence introducing another, and explaining it, till the whole mystery of God's counsel and conduct be finished in the world.

2. He heard a proclamation made concerning this sealed book. 1. The crier was a *strong angel*: Not that there are any weak ones among the angels in heaven, though there are many among the angels of the churches. This angel seems to come out, not only as a crier but as a champion, with a challenge to any, or all the creatures, to try the strength of their wisdom in opening the counsels of God; and as a champion, he cried with a loud voice, that every creature might hear. 2. The cry or challenge proclaimed was, *who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?* ver. 2. If there be any creature that thinks himself sufficient either to explain or execute the counsels of God, let him stand forth and make the attempt. 3. None in heaven or earth could accept the challenge, and undertake the task. None in heaven, none of the glorious holy angels, though before the throne of God, and the ministers of his providence, they with all their wisdom cannot dive into the decrees of God, none on earth, no man, the wisest or the best of men; none of the magicians and sooth-sayers; none of the prophets of God, any farther than he reveals his mind to them. *None under the earth*; none of the fallen angels, none of the spirits of men departed, though they should return to our world, can open this book. Satan himself, with all his subtilty, cannot do it; the creatures cannot open it, nor look on it; they cannot read it, God only can do it.

3. He felt a great concern in himself about this matter; the apostle wept much: it was a great disappointment to him: By what he had seen in him that sat upon the throne, he was very desirous to see and know more of his mind and will: And this desire, when not presently gratified, filled him with sorrow, and fetched many tears from his eyes. Here observe, 1. Those that have seen most of God in this world, are most desirous to see more; and they that have seen his glory, desire to know his will. 2. Good men may be too eager and too hasty to look into the mysteries of divine conduct. 3. Such desires, not presently answered, turn to grief and sorrow; hope deferred makes the heart sick.

4. The apostle was comforted and encouraged to hope this sealed book should

should yet be opened. Here observe, 1. Who it was that gave St. John the hint; *one of the elders*. God had revealed it to the church, if angels do not refuse to learn from the church, ministers should not disdain to do it. God can make his people to instruct and inform their teachers when he pleases. 2. Who it was that would do the thing; the Lord Jesus Christ, called, *the lion of the tribe of Judah*, according to his human nature; alluding to Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. iv. 10.* and *the root of David*, according to his divine nature, though a branch of David, according to the flesh. He who is a middle person, God and man, and bears the office of mediator between God and man, is fit and worthy to open and execute all the counsels of God towards men. And this he does in his mediatorial state and capacity, *as the root of David, and the offspring of Judah*; and as the king and head of the Israel of God; and he will do it, to the consolation and joy of all his people.

6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. 14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Here, 1. The apostle beholds this book taken into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to its being opened and executed by him. Where Christ is described, 1. By this place and station; *in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and of the elders*. He was on the same throne with the Father, he was nearer to him than either the elders or ministers of the churches. Christ, as man and mediator, is subordinate to God the Father, but is nearer to him than all the creatures, *for in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily*. The ministers stand between God and the people. Christ stands as mediator between God and both ministers and people. 2. The form in which he appeared. Before he is called *a lion*; here he appears *as a lamb slain*. He is a lion to conquer Satan, a lamb to satisfy the justice of God. He appears with the marks of his sufferings upon him, to shew that he intercedes in heaven in the virtue of his satisfaction. He appears *as a lamb, having seven horns, and seven eyes*; perfect power to execute all the will of God, and perfect wisdom to understand it all, and to do it in the most effectual manner; *for he hath the seven Spirits of God*, he has received the holy Spirit without measure, in all perfection of light, and life, and power, by which he is able to teach and rule all parts of the earth. 3. He is described by his act and deed: *He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne, ver. 7.* not by violence, nor by fraud; but he prevailed to do it, as *ver. 5.* he prevailed by his merit and worthiness, he did it by authority, and by the Father's appointment: God very willingly and justly put the book of his eternal counsels into the hand of Christ, and Christ as readily and gladly took it into his hand; for he delights to reveal, and to do the will of his Father.

2. The apostle observes the universal joy and thanksgiving that filled heaven and earth upon this transaction. No sooner had Christ received this book out of the Father's hand, but he receives applauses and adorations of angels and men, yea, of every creature. And indeed, it is just matter of joy to all the world to see that God does not deal with men in a way of absolute power and strict justice, but in a way of grace and mercy through the Redeemer: He governs the world, not merely as a creator and law-giver, but as our God and Saviour. All the world has reason to rejoice in this.

The song of praise that was offered up to the Lamb on this occasion, consists of three parts; one part sung by the church, the other by the church and the angels, the third by every creature.

1. The church begins the doxology, as being more immediately concerned in it, *ver. 8.* the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, the Christian people, under their minister, they lead up the chorus; where observe, 1. The object of their worship, *the Lamb*, the Lord Jesus Christ; it is the declared will of God, that all men should honour the Son, *as they honour the Father*; for he has the same nature. 2. Their posture; they fell down before him; gave him not an inferior sort of worship, but the most profound adoration. 3. The instruments used in their adorations; *harps and vials*; the harps were the instruments of praise, the vials were full of odours or incense, which signify the prayer of the saints; prayer and praise should always go together. 4. The matter of their song; it was suited to the new state of the church, the gospel state in this new Son. 1. They acknowledge the infinite fitness and worthiness of the Lord Jesus for this great work of opening and executing the counsel and purposes of God, *ver. 9.* *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof*; every way sufficient for the work, and deserving of the honour. 2. They mention the grounds and reason of this worthiness, and though they do not exclude the dignity of his person as God, without which he had not been sufficient for

it, yet they chiefly insist upon the merit of his sufferings, which he had endured for them; these more sensibly struck their souls with thankfulness and joy: Here, 1. They mention his suffering; *thou wast slain, slain as a sacrifice, thy blood was shed.* 2. The fruits of his sufferings: 1. Redemption to God; *Christ has redeemed his people* from the bondage of sin, guilt, and Satan; redeemed them to God; set them at liberty to serve him, and to enjoy him. 2. High exaltation; *thou hast made us to our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth, ver. 10.* Every ransomed slave is not immediately preferred to honour, he thinks it a great favour to be restored to liberty; but when the elect of God were made slaves by sin and Satan, in every nation of the world, Christ not only purchased their liberty for them, but the highest honour and preferment, *made them kings and priests; kings, to rule over their own spirits, and to overcome the world, and the evil one*; and he has made them priests, given them access to himself, and liberty to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and they shall reign on the earth; they shall with him judge the world at the great day. 2. The doxology thus begun by the church, is carried on by the angels, they take the second part, in conjunction with the church, *ver. 11.* they are said to be innumerable, and to be the attendants on the throne of God, and guardians to the church, and though they did not need a Saviour themselves, yet they rejoice in the redemption and salvation of sinners; and they agree with the church in acknowledging the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus as dying for sinners, that he is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 1. He is worthy of that office and authority which requires the greatest power and wisdom, the greatest fund, all excellency, to discharge it aright; and, 2. That he is worthy of all honour, and glory, and blessing, because he is sufficient for the office, and faithful in it. 3. This doxology, thus begun by the church, and carried on by the angels, is resounded and echoed by the whole creation, *ver. 13.* heaven and earth ring with the high praises of the Redeemer, the whole creation fears the better for Christ, *by him all things consist*; and all the creatures, had they sense and language, would adore that great Redeemer, who delivers the creature from that bondage under which it groans, through the corruption of men, and the just curse denounced by the great God upon the fall; that part that (by a propopoeia) is made for the whole creation, is a song of blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; 1. To him that sits on the throne, to God, as God; or to God the Father, as the first person in the Trinity, and the first in the economy of our salvation; and 2. To the Lamb, as the second person in the Godhead, and the mediator of the new covenant; not that the worship paid to the Lamb is of another nature, an inferior worship, for the very same honour and glory is in the same words ascribed to the Lamb, and to him that sits on the throne; their essence being the same, but their parts in the work of our salvation being distinct, they are distinctly adored: We worship and glorify one and the same God for our creation, and for our redemption.

And we see how the church that begun the heavenly anthem, finding heaven and earth join in the concert, closes all with their Amen, and end as they began, with a low prostration before the eternal and everlasting God. Thus we have seen this sealed book passing with great solemnity from the hand of the Creator into the hand of the Redeemer.

CHAP. VI.

The book of the divine counsels being thus lodged in the hand of Christ, he loses no time, but immediately enters upon the work of opening the seals, and publishing the contents; but this is done in such a manner, as still leaves the predictions very obscure, and difficult to be understood: Hitherto the waters of the sanctuary have been as those in Ezekiel's vision, only to the ankles, or to the knees, or to the loins at least; but here they begin to be a river that cannot be passed over; the visions which John saw, the epistles to the churches, the songs of praise, in the two foregoing chapters, had some things dark and hard to be understood; and yet they were rather milk for babes, than meat for strong men; but now we are to launch into the deep, and our business is not so much to fathom it, as to let down our net to take a draught: We shall only hint at what seems most obvious; the prophecies of this book are divided into seven seals opened, seven trumpets sounding, and seven vials poured out; it is supposed that the opening of the seven seals discloses those providences that were conversant about the church in the three first centuries; from the ascension of our Lord and Saviour, to the reign of Constantine; this was represented in a book rolled up, and sealed in several places, so that when one seal was opened, you might read so far of it, and so on, till the whole was unfolded: Yet we are not here told what was written in the book, but what John saw in figures enigmatical and hieroglyphic; and it is not for us to pretend to know the times and the seasons which the Father has put in his own power. In this chapter six of the seven seals are opened, and the visions attending them are related; the first seal in *ver. 3.* the third seal in *ver. 5.* the fourth seal in *ver. 7.* the fifth seal in *ver. 9—11.* the sixth seal in *ver. 12, 13, &c.*

1. **A**ND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts, saying, Come, and see. 2. And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Here, 1. Christ, the Lamb, opens the first seal, he now enters upon the great work of opening and accomplishing the purposes of God towards the church and the world. 2. One of the ministers of the church calls upon the apostle, with a voice like thunder, to come near, and observe what then appeared: 3. We have the vision itself, *ver. 2.* 1. The Lord Jesus appears riding on a white horse; white horses are generally refused in war, because they make the rider a mark for the enemy; but our Lord Redeemer was sure of the victory and a glorious triumph, and he rides on the white horse of a pure but despised gospel, with great swiftness through the world.

2. He had a bow in his hand; the convictions impressed by the word of God are sharp arrows, they reach at a distance, and through the ministers of the word draw the bow at a venture, God can and will direct it to the joints of the harness; this bow, in the hand of Christ, abides in strength, and, like that of Jonathan, never returns empty.

3. A crown was given him, importing, that all who receive the gospel, must receive Christ as a king, and must be his loyal and obedient subjects; he will be glorified in the success of the gospel: When Christ was going to war, one would think an helmet had been more proper than a crown; but a crown is given him as an earnest and emblem of victory.

and especially of the church, through our Lord Jesus Christ. This attribute is displayed in pardoning us as well as in punishing, in saving as well as in destroying sinners. 3. *He saw a rainbow about the throne like unto an emerald*, ver. 3. The rainbow was the seal and token of the covenant of providence that God made with Noah and his posterity with him, and is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise that God has made with Christ as the head of the church, and all his people in him; which covenant is as the waters of Noah unto God, an everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and sure. This rainbow looked like the emerald; the most prevailing colour was a pleasant green, to shew the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant. 4. *He saw four and twenty seats round about the throne*, not empty, but filled with *four and twenty elders*, presbyters, representing very probably, the whole church of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament state. Not the ministers of the church, but rather the representatives of the people. Their sitting denotes their honour, and their rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne, signifies their relation to God, their nearness to him, the sight and enjoyment they have of him, and their continual regard to him. *They are clothed in white raiment*, the righteousness of the saints, both imputed and inherent; *they had on their heads crowns of gold*, signifying the honour and authority given them of God, and the glory they have with him. All these may in a lower sense be applied to the gospel church on earth, in its worshipping assemblies; and in the higher sense, to the church triumphant in heaven. 5. *He perceived lightnings and voices proceed out of the throne*; that is, the awful declarations that he makes to his church of his sovereign will and pleasure. Thus he gave forth the law on mount Sinai, and the gospel has not less glory and authority than the law, though it be of a more spiritual nature. 6. *He saw seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*, which are explained to be the *seven Spirits of God*, ver. 5. The various gifts and graces, and operations of the Spirit of God in the churches of Christ; these are all dispensed according to the will and pleasure of him that sits upon the throne. 7. *He saw before the throne a sea of glass, like unto crystal*. As in the temple there was a great vessel of brass filled with water, in which the priests were to wash when they went to minister before the Lord; and this was called a sea: So in the gospel-church, the sea or laver for purification is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that cleanses from all sin, even from sanctuary sins. And in this all those must be washed that are admitted into the gracious presence of God on earth, or his glorious presence in heaven. 8. *He saw four animals*, living creatures, between the throne and the circle of the elders (as seems most probable) standing between God and the people; these seem to signify the ministers of the gospel, not only because of this their situation nearer to God, and between him and the elders or representatives of the Christian people, and because fewer in number than the people; but as they are here described, 1. By their many eyes, denoting sagacity, vigilance, and circumspection. 2. By their lion-like courage, their great labour and diligence, in which they resemble the ox; their prudence and discretion, becoming men; and their sublime affections and speculations, by which they mount up *with wings like eagles towards heaven*, ver. 7. and these wings full of eyes within, to shew that in all their meditations and ministrations they are to act with knowledge, and especially should be well acquainted with themselves and the state of their own souls, and see their own concern in the great doctrines and duties of religion, watching over their own souls as well as the souls of the people. 3. By their continual employment, and that is praising God, and not ceasing to do so night and day. The elders sit and are ministered unto, they stand and minister, they rest not night and day. This now leads to the other part of the representation.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever. 10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.

We have considered the sights that the apostle saw in heaven, now let us observe, 2. The songs that he heard, for there is in heaven not only that to be seen that will highly please a sanctified eye, but there is that to be heard that will greatly delight a sanctified ear. It is true concerning the church of Christ here, which is an heaven upon earth, and it will be eminently so in the church made perfect in the heaven of heavens. 1. He heard the song of the four living creatures, of the ministers of the church, which refers to the prophet Elisha's vision, chap. vi. And here, 1. They adore one God, the one only, the Lord God Almighty, unchangeable and everlasting. 2. They adore three holies in this one God, the holy Father, the holy Son, and the holy Spirit, and these are one infinitely holy and eternal Being, that sits upon the throne, and lives for ever and ever. In this glory the prophet saw Christ and spoke of him. 2. He heard the adorations of the *four and twenty elders*, that is, of the Christian people represented by them; the ministers led, and the people followed in the praises of God, ver. 10, 11. Where observe, 1. The object of their worship, the same with that which the ministers adored, him that sat on the throne, the eternal, ever-living God. The true church of God has one and the same object of worship: Two different objects of worship, either co-ordinate or subordinate would confound the worship, and divide the worshippers. It is unlawful to join in divine worship with those that either mistake or multiply the object. There is but one God, and he alone as God is worshipped by the church on earth and in heaven. 2. The acts of adoration. 1. *They fell down before him that sat on the throne*; they discovered the most profound humility, reverence, and godly fear. 2. *They cast down their crowns before the throne*; they gave God the glory of that holiness, wherewith he had crowned their souls on earth, and that honour and happiness with which he crowns them in heaven: They owe all their graces and all their glories to him, and acknowledge that his crown is infinitely more glorious than theirs, and that it is their glory to be glorifying God. 3. The words of adoration, they said, *thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power*, ver. 11. Observe, 1. They do not say we give thee glory, and honour, and power; for what can any creature pretend to give unto God? but they say, *thou art worthy to receive glory*. 2. In this they tacitly acknowledge, that God was exalted far above all blessing and praise: he was worthy to receive glory, but they were not worthy to praise, nor able to do it according to his infinite excellencies. 3. We have the ground and reason of their adora-

tion, which is threefold. 1. He is the creator of all things, the first cause; and none but the creator of all things should be adored, no made thing can be the object of religious worship. 2. He is the preserver of all things, and his preservation is a continual creation; they are created still by the sustaining power of God; all beings but God are dependant upon the will and power of God, and no dependant being must be set up as an object of religious worship: It is the part of the best dependant beings to be worshippers, not to be worshipped. 3. He is the final cause of all things; *for thy pleasure they are and were created*. It was his will and pleasure to create all things, he was not put upon it by the will of another; there is no such thing as a subordinate creator, that acts under and by the will and power of another; and if there were, he ought not to be worshipped; and as he made all things at his pleasure, he made them for his pleasure, to deal with them as he pleases, and to glorify himself by them one way or other. Though he delights not in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn and live, yet he hath made all things for himself, Prov. xvi. 4. Now if these be true and sufficient grounds for religious worship, as they are proper to God alone, Christ must needs be God, one with the Father and Spirit, and be worshipped as such; for we find the same causality ascribed to him, Col. i. 16, 17. *All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist*.

C H A P. V.

In the foregoing chapter the prophetic scene was opened, in the sight and hearing of the apostle, and he had a sight of God the creator and ruler of the world, and the great king of the church. He saw God on the throne of glory and government, surrounded with his holy ones, and receiving their adorations. Now the counsels and decrees of God are here set before the apostles, as in a book, which God held in his right hand; and this book is represented, 1. As sealed in the hand of God, from ver. 1-6. 2. As taken into the hand of Christ the redeemer, to be unsealed and opened, from ver. 6. to the end.

1. **A**ND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4. And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Hitherto the apostle had only seen the great God governor of all things; now, 1. He is favoured with a sight of the model and methods of his government, as they are all written down in a book which he holds in his hand; and this we are now to consider as shut up and sealed in the hand of God. Observe, 1. That the designs and methods of divine providence towards the church and the world are stated and fixed; they are resolved upon and agreed to, as that which is written in a book: The great design is laid, every part adjusted, all determined, and every thing passed into decree, and made a matter of record. The original and first draught of this book, is the book of God's decrees, laid up in his own cabinet, in his eternal mind: But there is a transcript of so much as was necessary to be known in the book of the scripture in general; in the prophetic part of scripture especially, and in this prophecy in particular. 2. God holds this book in his right hand, to declare the authority of the book, and his readiness and resolution to execute all the contents thereof, all the counsels and purposes therein recorded. 3. This book in the hand of God is shut up and sealed; it is known to none but himself, till he allows it to be opened. Known unto God, and to him alone, are all his works, from the beginning of the world; but it is his glory to conceal the matter as he pleases: The times and seasons, and their great events, he hath kept in his own hand and power. 4. *It is sealed with seven seals*. This tells us with what inscrutable secrecy the counsels of God are laid, how impenetrable by the eye and intellect of the creature; and also points to us seven several parts of this book of God's counsels; each part seems to have its particular seal, and when opened discovers its proper events; and these seven parts are not unsealed and opened at once, but successively, one scene of providence introducing another, and explaining it, till the whole mystery of God's counsel and conduct be finished in the world.

2. He heard a proclamation made concerning this sealed book. 1. The crier was a *strong angel*: Not that there are any weak ones among the angels in heaven, though there are many among the angels of the churches. This angel seems to come out, not only as a crier but as a champion, with a challenge to any, or all the creatures, to try the strength of their wisdom in opening the counsels of God; and as a champion, he cried with a loud voice, that every creature might hear. 2. The cry or challenge proclaimed was, *who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?* ver. 2. If there be any creature that thinks himself sufficient either to explain or execute the counsels of God, let him stand forth and make the attempt. 3. None in heaven or earth could accept the challenge, and undertake the task. None in heaven, none of the glorious holy angels, though before the throne of God, and the ministers of his providence, they with all their wisdom cannot dive into the decrees of God, none on earth, no man, the wisest or the best of men; none of the magicians and sooth-sayers; none of the prophets of God, any farther than he reveals his mind to them. *None under the earth*; none of the fallen angels, none of the spirits of men departed, though they should return to our world, can open this book. Satan himself, with all his subtilty, cannot do it; the creatures cannot open it, nor look on it; they cannot read it, God only can do it.

3. He felt a great concern in himself about this matter; the apostle wept much: it was a great disappointment to him: By what he had seen in him that sat upon the throne, he was very desirous to see and know more of his mind and will: And this desire, when not presently gratified, filled him with sorrow, and fetched many tears from his eyes. Here observe, 1. Those that have seen most of God in this world, are most desirous to see more; and they that have seen his glory, desire to know his will. 2. Good men may be too eager and too hasty to look into the mysteries of divine conduct. 3. Such desires, not presently answered, turn to grief and sorrow; hope deferred makes the heart sick.

4. The apostle was comforted and encouraged to hope this sealed book should

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6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Here, 1. The apostle beholds this book taken into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to its being opened and executed by him. Where Christ is described, 1. By this place and station; *in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and of the elders*. He was on the same throne with the Father, he was nearer to him than either the elders or ministers of the churches. Christ, as man and mediator, is subordinate to God the Father, but is nearer to him than all the creatures, *for in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily*. The ministers stand between God and the people. Christ stands as mediator between God and both ministers and people. 2. The form in which he appeared. Before he is called a lion; here he appears as a lamb slain: He is a lion to conquer Satan, a lamb to satisfy the justice of God. He appears with the marks of his sufferings upon him, to shew that he intercedes in heaven in the virtue of his satisfaction. He appears as a lamb, *having seven horns, and seven eyes*; perfect power to execute all the will of God, and perfect wisdom to understand it all, and to do it in the most effectual manner; *for he hath the seven Spirits of God*, he has received the holy Spirit without measure, in all perfection of light, and life, and power, by which he is able to teach and rule all parts of the earth. 3. He is described by his act and deed: *He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne*, ver. 7. not by violence, nor by fraud; but he prevailed to do it, as ver. 5. he prevailed by his merit and worthiness, he did it by authority, and by the Father's appointment: God very willingly and justly put the book of his eternal counsels into the hand of Christ, and Christ as readily and gladly took it into his hand; for he delights to reveal, and to do the will of his Father.

2. The apostle observes the universal joy and thanksgiving that filled heaven and earth upon this transaction. No sooner had Christ received this book out of the Father's hand, but he receives applauses and adorations of angels and men, *yea, of every creature*. And indeed, it is just matter of joy to all the world to see that God does not deal with men in a way of absolute power and strict justice, but in a way of grace and mercy through the Redeemer: He governs the world, not merely as a creator and law-giver, but as our God and Saviour. All the world has reason to rejoice in this.

The song of praise that was offered up to the Lamb on this occasion, consists of three parts; one part sung by the church, the other by the church and the angels, the third by every creature.

1. The church begins the doxology, as being more immediately concerned in it, ver. 8. the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, the Christian people, under their minister, they lead up the chorus; where observe, 1. The object of their worship, *the Lamb*, the Lord Jesus Christ; it is the declared will of God, that all men should honour the Son, as they honour the Father; for he has the same nature. 2. Their posture; they fell down before him; gave him not an inferior sort of worship, but the most profound adoration. 3. The instruments used in their adorations; *harps and vials*; the harps were the instruments of praise, the vials were full of odours or incense, which signify the prayer of the saints; prayer and praise should always go together. 4. The matter of their song; it was suited to the new state of the church, the gospel state in this new Son. 1. They acknowledge the infinite fitness and worthiness of the Lord Jesus for this great work of opening and executing the counsel and purposes of God, ver. 9. *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof*; every way sufficient for the work, and deserving of the honour. 2. They mention the grounds and reasons of this worthiness, and though they do not exclude the dignity of his person as God, without which he had not been sufficient for

it, yet they chiefly insist upon the merit of his sufferings, which he had endured for them; these more sensibly struck their soul with thankfulness and joy: Here, 1. They mention his suffering; *the Lamb that was slain*, as a sacrifice, *the blood was shed*. 2. The fruits of his suffering. 1. Redemption to God; *Christ has redeemed his people from the bondage of sin, guilt, and Satan; redeemed them to God; set them at liberty to love him, and to enjoy him*. 2. High exaltation: *from whom he has set us free, God has exalted him, and he shall reign on the earth*. Every redeemed slave is not immediately promoted to liberty, but the Lord has graciously set us free to be restored to liberty; but when the elect of God were set free by sin and Satan, in every nation of the world, Christ not only purchased their liberty for them, but the highest honour and perfection, *he made them kings and priests, kings, to rule over their own spirits, and to overcome the world, and the evil one*; and he has made them priests, given them access to himself, and liberty to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and then shall reign on the earth; they shall with him judge the world at the great day. 2. The doxology thus begun by the church, is carried on by the angels, they take the second part, in conjunction with the church, ver. 11. they are said to be innumerable, and to be the attendants on the throne of God, and guardians to the church, and though they did not need a Saviour themselves, yet they rejoice in the redemption and salvation of sinners; and they agree with the church in acknowledging the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus as dying for sinners, that he is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 1. He is worthy of that office and authority which requires the greatest power and wisdom, the greatest fund, all excellency, to discharge it aright; and, 2. That he is worthy of all honour, and glory, and blessing, because he is sufficient for the office, and faithful in it. 3. This doxology, thus begun by the church, and carried on by the angels, is resounded and echoed by the whole creation, ver. 13. heaven and earth ring with the high praises of the Redeemer, the whole creation fears the better for Christ, *in him all things consist*; and all the creatures, had they sense and language, would adore that great Redeemer, who delivers the creature from that bondage under which it groans, through the corruption of men, and the just curse denounced by the great God upon the fall; that part that (by a prosopopœia) is made for the whole creation, is a song of blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; 1. To him that sits on the throne, to God, as God; or to God the Father, as the first person in the Trinity, and the first in the economy of our salvation; and 2. To the Lamb, as the second person in the Godhead, and the mediator of the new covenant; not that the worship paid to the Lamb is of another nature, an inferior worship, for the very same honour and glory is in the same words ascribed to the Lamb, and to him that sits on the throne; their essence being the same, but their parts in the work of our salvation being distinct, they are distinctly adored: We worship and glorify one and the same God for our creation, and for our redemption.

And we see how the church that began the heavenly anthem, finding heaven and earth join in the concert, closes all with their Amen, and end as they began, with a low prostration before the eternal and everlasting God. Thus we have seen this sealed book passing with great solemnity from the hand of the Creator into the hand of the Redeemer.

CHAP. VI.

The book of the divine counsels being thus lodged in the hand of Christ, he loses no time, but immediately enters upon the work of opening the seals, and publishing the contents; but this is done in such a manner, as still leaves the predictions very abstruse, and difficult to be understood: Hitherto the waters of the sanctuary have been as those in Ezekiel's vision, only to the ankles, or to the knees, or to the loins at least; but here they begin to be a river that cannot be passed over; the visions which John saw, the epistles to the churches, the songs of praise, in the two foregoing chapters, had some things dark and hard to be understood; and yet they were rather milk for babes, than meat for strong men; but now we are to launch into the deep, and our business is not so much to fathom it, as to let down our net to take a draught: We shall only hint at what seems most obvious; the prophecies of this book are divided into seven seals opened, seven trumpets sounding, and seven vials poured out; it is supposed that the opening of the seven seals discloses those providences that were conversant about the church in the three first centuries; from the ascension of our Lord and Saviour, to the reign of Constantine; this was represented in a book rolled up, and sealed in several places, so that when one seal was opened, you might read so far of it, and so on, till the whole was unfolded: Yet we are not here told what was written in the book, but what John saw in figures enigmatical and hieroglyphic; and it is not for us to pretend to know the times and the seasons which the Father has put in his own power. In this chapter six of the seven seals are opened, and the visions attending them are related; the first seal in ver. 3, 4. the third seal in ver. 5, 6. the fourth seal in ver. 7, 8. the fifth seal in ver. 9—11. the sixth seal in ver. 12, 13, &c.

1. AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts, saying, Come, and see. 2. And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Here, 1. Christ, the Lamb, opens the first seal, he now enters upon the great work of opening and accomplishing the purposes of God towards the church and the world. 2. One of the ministers of the church calls upon the apostle, with a voice like thunder, to come near, and observe what then appeared. 3. We have the vision itself, ver. 2. 1. The Lord Jesus appears riding on a white horse; white horses are generally retined in war, because they make the rider a mark for the enemy; but our Lord Redeemer was sure of the victory and a glorious triumph, and he rides on the white horse of a pure but despised gospel, with great swiftness through the world.

2. He had a bow in his hand; the convictions impressed by the word of God are sharp arrows, they reach at a distance, and through the ministers of the word draw the bow at a venture, God can and will direct it to the joints of the harness; this bow, in the hand of Christ, abides in strength, and, like that of Jonathan, never returns empty.

3. A crown was given him, importing, that all who receive the gospel, must receive Christ as a king, and must be his loyal and obedient subjects; he will be glorified in the success of the gospel: When Christ was going to war, one would think an helmet had been more proper than a crown; but a crown is given him as an earnest and emblem of victory.

4. *He went forth conquering, and to conquer.* As long as the church continues militant, Christ will be *conquering*; when he has *conquered* his enemies in one age, he meets with new ones in another age; men go on opposing and Christ goes on *conquering*; and his former victories are pledges of future victories; *he conquers* his enemies in his people; their sins are their enemies, and his enemies; when Christ comes with power into their soul, he begins to *conquer* their enemies, and he goes on *conquering*, in the progressive work of sanctification, till he has gained us complete victory; and he *conquers* his enemies in the world, wicked men, some by bringing them to his foot, others by making them his footstool. Observe, from this *seal opened*, 1. That the successful progress of the gospel of Christ in the world is a glorious sight, worth beholding, the most pleasant and welcome sight that a good man can see in this world. 2. That, whatever convulsions and revolutions happen in the states and kingdoms of the world, the kingdom of Christ shall be established and enlarged in spite of all opposition. 3. That a morning of opportunity usually goes before a night of calamity, the gospel is preached before the plagues are poured forth. 4. Christ's work is not all done at once, we are ready to think when the gospel goes forth, it should carry all the world before it, but it often meets with opposition, and moves slowly; however, Christ will do his own work effectually, in his own time and way.

3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come, and see. 4. And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. 5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come, and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. 7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come, and see. 8. And I looked, and behold, a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The three next seals give us a sad prospect of great and desolating judgments, with which God uses to punish those that either refuse or abuse the everlasting gospel; though some understand them of the persecutions that befall the church of Christ, and others of the destruction, of the Jews, they rather seem more generally to represent God's terrible judgments, by which he avenges the quarrel of his covenant upon those that make light of it.

1. Upon opening the second seal, to which John was called to attend, another horse appears, of a different colour from the former, a red horse, ver. 4. this signifies the desolating judgment of war; he that sat upon this red horse had power to take peace from the earth, and that the inhabitants of the earth should kill one another: Who this was that sat upon the red horse, whether Christ himself, as Lord of hosts, or the instruments that he raised up to conduct the war, is not clear; but this is certain, 1. That those who will not submit to the bow of the gospel, must expect to be cut in sunder by the sword of divine justice. 2. That Jesus Christ rules and commands, not only in the kingdom of grace, but of Providence. And, 3. That the sword of war is a dreadful judgment, it takes away peace from the earth, one of the greatest blessings, and it puts men upon killing one another; men, that should love one another, and help one another, are in a state of war, set upon killing one another.

2. Upon opening the third seal, which John is bid to observe, another horse appears, different from the former, a black horse, signifying famine, that terrible judgment, and he that sat on that horse; had a pair of balances in his hand, ver. 5. signifying, that men must now eat their bread by weight, as was threatened, Lev. xxvi. 26. *They shall deliver your bread to you by weight.* That which follows in ver. 6. of the voice that cried, *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine;* has made some expositors think this was not a vision of famine, but of plenty; but if we consider the quantity of their measure, and the value of their penny, at the time of this prophecy, the objection will be removed; their measure was but a single quart, and their penny was our seven pence halfpenny, and that is a great deal to give for a quart of wheat; however, it seems, this famine, as all others, fell most severely upon the poor; whereas the oil and the wine, which were dainties of the rich, were not hurt; but if bread, the staff of life, be broken, dainties will not supply the place of it: Here observe, 1. That when a people lose their spiritual food, God may justly deprive them of their daily bread. 2. That one judgment seldom comes alone, and the judgment of war naturally draws after it that of famine; and those that will not humble themselves under one judgment, must expect another, and yet greater; for when God contends he will prevail: The famine of bread is a terrible judgment, but the famine of the word is more so, though careless sinners are not sensible of it.

3. Upon opening the fourth seal, which John is commanded to observe, there appears another horse, of a pale colour; where observe, The name of the rider Death, the king of terrors; the pestilence, which is death in its empire, death reigning over a place or nation, death on her back, marching about, and making fresh conquests every hour. 2. The attendants or followers of the king of terrors, and that is hell, a state of eternal misery to all those that die in their sins; and, in times of such a general destruction, multitudes go down unprepared into the valley of destruction: It is an awful thought, and enough to make the whole world to tremble, that eternal damnation immediately follows upon the death of an impenitent sinner. Observe, 1. There is a natural as well as judicial connection between one judgment, and another; war is a wasting calamity, and draws scarcity and famine after it; and famine, not a lowering men proper sustenance, and forcing them to take that which is unwholesome, often draws the pestilence after it. 2. God's quiver is full of arrows, he is never at a loss for ways and means to punish a wicked people. 3. In the book of God's counsels he has prepared judgments for scorners, as well as mercy for returning sinners. 4. In the book of the scriptures God hath published threatenings against the wicked, as well as promises to the righteous; and it is our duty to observe and believe the threatenings, as well as the promises.

4. After the opening of these seals of approaching judgments, and the dis-

ting account of them, we have this general observation, that God gave power to them, over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth, ver. 8. he gave them power, that is, those instruments of his anger, or those judgments themselves; he that holds the winds in his hand, has all public calamities at his command, and they can only go when he sends them, and no farther than he permits: To the three great judgments of war, famine, and pestilence, is here added the beasts of the earth, another of God's sore judgments, mentioned Ezek. xiv. 21. and mentioned the last; because when a nation is depopulated with the sword, famine, and pestilence, the small remnant that continued in a waste and howling wilderness, encourage the wild beasts to make head against them, and they become an easy prey. Others, by the beasts of the field, understand brutish, cruel, savage men, that having divested themselves of all humanity, delight to be the instruments of the destruction of others.

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. 12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14. And the heaven departed as a scrowl when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

In the remaining part of this chapter, we have the opening of the fifth and the sixth seals.

(1.) The fifth seal; and here is no mention made of any one that called the apostle to make his observation, either because the decorum of the vision was to be observed, and each of the four living creatures had discharged their duty of a monitor before, or because the events here opened lay out of the sight, and beyond the time of the present ministers of the church, or because it doth not contain a new prophecy of any future events, but rather opens a spring of support and consolation to those that had been, and still were, under great tribulation for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Here observe,

1. The sight this apostle saw at the opening of the fifth seal, and it was a very affecting sight, ver. 9. *I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.* He saw the souls of the martyrs. Here observe, 1. Where he saw them, under the altar; at the foot of the altar of incense, in the most holy; he saw them in heaven, at the foot of Christ. Hence note, 1. That persecutors can only kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do, their souls live. 2. God had provided a better place in the better world for those who are faithful to death, and are not allowed a place any longer on earth. 3. That holy martyrs are very near to Christ in heaven, they have the highest place there. 4. That it is not their own death, but the sacrifice of Christ that gives them a reception into heaven, and a reward there; they do not wash their robes in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb. (2.) What was the cause in which they suffered, the word of God, and the testimony which they held; for believing, the word of God, and attesting or confessing the truth of it; this profession of their faith they held fast without wavering, even though they died for it: A noble cause! the best that any man can lay down his life for; faith in God's word, and a confession of that faith!

2. The cry he heard; it was a loud cry, and contains an humble expostulation about the long delay of avenging justice against their enemies: *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* ver. 10. Observe, 1. That even the spirit of just men made perfect retain a proper resentment of the wrong they have sustained by their cruel enemies; and though they die in charity, praying, as Christ did, that God would forgive them, yet they are desirous that, for the honour of God, and Christ, and the gospel, and for the terror and conviction of others, God will take a just revenge upon the sin of persecution, even while he pardons and saves the persecutors. 2. That they commit their cause to him to whom vengeance belongeth, and leave it in his hand; they are not for avenging themselves, but leave all to God. 3. That there will be joy in heaven at the destruction of the implacable enemies of Christ and Christianity, as well as at the conversion of other sinners: When Babylon falls, it will be said, *Rejoice over her, O thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.* Rev. xviii. 29.

3. He observed the kind return that was made to this cry, ver. 11. both what was given them, and what was said to them: 1. What was given to them, white robes, the robes of victory and of honour; their present happiness was an abundant recompense of their past sufferings. 2. What was said to them, that they should be satisfied, and easy in themselves, for it would not be long but the number of their fellow-sufferers should be fulfilled; this is a language rather suited to the imperfect state of the saints in this world, than to the perfection of their state in heaven; there is no impatience, no uneasiness, no need of admittance; but in this world there is great need of patience. Observe, 1. There is a great number of Christians known to God, that are appointed as *sheep for the slaughter*, set apart to be God's witnesses. 2. That as the measure of the sin of persecutors is filling up, so is the number of the persecuted martyred servants of Christ. 3. That when this number is fulfilled, God will take a just and glorious revenge upon their cruel persecutors;

he will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them; and to those that be troubled, full and uninterrupted rest.

2. We have here *the sixth seal opened*, ver. 12. Some refer this to the great revolutions in the empire in Constantine's time, and downfall of paganism; others, with great probability, to the destruction of Jerusalem, as an emblem of the general judgment, and destruction of the wicked, at the end of the world; and, indeed, the awful characters of this event are so much the same with those signs mentioned by our Saviour, as foreboding the destruction of Jerusalem, that it hardly leaves any room for doubting but that the same thing is meant in both places, though some think, that event was past already: See *Matt. xxiv. 39, 50*. Here observe,

1. The tremendous events that were hastening, and here are several occurrences that contribute to make that day and dispensation very dreadful: 1. *There was a great earthquake*; this may be taken in a political sense; the very foundations of the Jewish church and state would be terribly shaken; though they seemed to be as stable as the earth itself. 2. *The sun became black as sackcloth of hair*, either naturally, by a total eclipse, or politically, by the fall of the chief rulers and governors of the land. 3. *The moon should become as blood*, the inferior officers, or their military men, they should be all wallowing in their own blood. 4. *The stars of heaven should fall to the earth*, ver. 13, and that as *fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind*. The stars may signify all the men of note and influence among them, though, in lower sphere of activity, there should be a general desolation. 5. *The heaven should depart as a scroll when it is rolled together*. That may intend, their ecclesiastical state shall perish and be laid aside for ever. 6. *Every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places*: The destruction of the Jewish nation should affect and affright all the nations round about, those that were highest in honour, and those that seemed to be best secured; it would be a judgment that should astonish all the world: This leads to,

3. The dread and terror that will seize upon all sorts of men in that great and awful day, *ver. 15*. neither authority, nor grandeur, nor riches, nor valour, nor strength, would be able to support men at that time: yea, the very poor slaves, that, one would think, had nothing to fear, because they had nothing to lose, would be all in amaze and terror at that day. Here observe, 1. The degree of their terror and astonishment, it should prevail so far as to make them like distracted desperate men, to call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them; they would be glad to be no more seen; yea, to have no longer any being. 2. The cause of their terror, and that was the angry countenance of him that sits on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb. Observe, 1. That which is matter of displeasure to Christ, is so to God; they are so intirely one, that what pleases or displeases the one, pleases or displeases the other. 2. Though God be invisible, he can make the inhabitants of this world sensible of his awful frowns. 3. Though Christ be a Lamb, yet he can be angry even to wrath, and that the wrath of the Lamb is exceeding dreadful; for if the Redeemer, that appeases the wrath of God, himself be our wrathful enemy, where shall we have a friend to plead for us? They perish without remedy, that perish by the wrath of the Redeemer. 4. That as men have their day of opportunity, and their seasons of grace, so God has his day of righteous wrath, and when that day comes, the most stout hearted sinners will not be able to stand before him; all these terrors actually fell upon the sinners in Judea and Jerusalem in the day of their destruction, and they will all, in the utmost degree, fall upon impenitent sinners, at the general judgment of the last day.

CHAP. VII.

The things contained in this chapter came in after the opening of the six seals which foretold great calamities to the world; and before the sound of the seven trumpets, which gave notice of great corruptions arising in the church; between these comes in this comfortable chapter, which secures the graces and comforts of the people of God in times of common calamity. We have, 1. An account of the restraint laid upon the winds, ver. 1—3. 2. The sealing of the servants of God, ver. 4—9. 3. The songs of angels and saints on this occasion, ver. 9—13. 4. A description of the honour and happiness of those that had faithfully served Christ, and suffered for him, ver. 13. &c.

1. **A**ND after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Here we have an account of the restraint laid upon the winds; by these winds we suppose are meant those errors and corruptions in religion which would occasion a great deal of trouble and mischief to the church of God; sometimes the holy Spirit is compared to the wind, here the spirits of error are compared to the four winds, contrary one to another, but doing much hurt to the church, the garden and vineyard of God, breaking the branches, and blasting the fruits of his plantation; the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, he, by a great wind, overthrew the house of Job's eldest son; errors are as wind, by which they that are unstable are shaken, and carried to and fro, *Eph. iv. 14*. Observe, 1. These are called the winds of the earth, because they blow only in these lower regions near the earth, heaven is always clear and free from them. 2. They are restrained by the ministry of angels, standing on the four corners of the earth, intimating, that the spirit of error cannot go forth till God permits it, and that the angels minister to the good of the church by restraining its enemies. 3. Their restraint was only for a season, and that was, till the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads; God has particular care and concern for his own servants in times of temptation and corruption, and he has a way to secure them from the common infection; he first establishes them, and then he tries them; he has the timing of their trials in his own hand.

4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed; and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel. 5. Of the tribes of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. 6. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manassah were sealed twelve thousand. 7. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8. Of the tribe of Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

We have here an account of the sealing of the servants of God; where observe, 1. To whom this work was committed, to an angel, another angel; while some of the angels were employed to restrain Satan and his agents, another angel was employed to mark out and distinguish the faithful servants of God. 2. How they were distinguished, the seal of God was set upon their foreheads, a seal known to him, and as plain as if it appeared in their foreheads; by this mark they were set apart for mercy and safety in the worst of times. 3. The number of those that were sealed; where observe, 1. A particular account of those that were sealed of the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve thousand out of every tribe, the whole sum amounting to an hundred and forty four thousand; in this list the tribe of Dan is omitted, perhaps because they were greatly addicted to idolatry; and the order of the tribes is altered, perhaps, according as they had been more or less faithful to God. Some take these to be a select number of the Jews that were reserved for mercy at the destruction of Jerusalem; others think that time was past, and therefore it is to be more generally applied to God's chosen remnant in the world; but if the destruction of Jerusalem was not yet over (and I think it is hard to prove that it was) it seems more proper to understand this of the remnant of that people which God had reserved according to the election of grace; only here we have a definite number for an indefinite. 2. A general account of those that were saved out of other nations, *ver. 9*. A great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; though these are not said to be sealed, yet they were selected by God out of all nations, and brought into his church, and there stood before the throne. Observe, 1. God will have a greater harvest of souls among the Gentiles, than he had among the Jews; more are the children of the desolate than of the married woman. 2. The Lord knows who are his, and he will keep them safe in times of dangerous temptation. 3. That though the church of God is but a little flock, in comparison of the wicked world, yet it is no contemptible society, but really large, and to be still more enlarged.

9. After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. 12. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Here we have the songs of saints and angels on this occasion; where observe, 1. The praises offered up by the saints, and, as it seems to me, by the Gentile believers, for the care of God in reserving so large a remnant of the Jews, and saving them from infidelity and destruction. The Jewish church prayed for the Gentiles before their conversion, and the Gentile churches have reason to bless God for his distinguishing mercy to so many of the Jews, when the rest were cut off. Here observe, 1. The posture of these praising saints, they stood before the throne, and before the Lamb; before the Creator, and the Mediator. In acts of religious worship we come nigh to God, and are to conceive ourselves as in his special presence; and we must come to God by Christ; the throne of God would be inaccessible to sinners, were it not for a mediator. 2. Their habit, they were clothed with white robes, and had palms in their hands; they were invested with the robes of justification, holiness, and victory, and had palms in their hands, as conquerors used to appear in their triumphs; such a glorious appearance will the faithful servants of God make at last, when they have fought the good fight of faith, and finished their course. 3. Their employment, they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. This may be understood either as an *hallelujah*, wishing well to the interest of God and Christ in the church, and in the world, or as an *hallelujah*, giving to God and the Lamb the praise of the great salvation; both the Father and the Son are joined together in these praises; the Father he contrived this salvation, the Son purchased it; and they that enjoyed it must and will bless the Lord and the Lamb; and they will do it publicly, and with becoming fervour.

2. Here is the song of the angels, *ver. 11, 12*. where observe, 1. Their station, before the throne of God, attending on him, and about the saints, ready to serve them. 2. Their posture, which is very humble, and expressive of the greatest reverence, they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Behold the most excellent of all the creatures that never sinned that are before him continually, not only covering their faces, but falling down on their faces before the Lord! What humility then, and what profound reverence, becomes us vile, frail creatures, when we come into the presence of God! We should fall down before him; there should be both a reverential frame of spirit, and an humble behaviour in all our addresses to God. 3. Their praises, they consented to the praises of the saints, said their Amen thereto; there is in heaven a perfect harmony between the angels and saints; and then they added more of their own, saying, Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. Where, 1. They acknowledge the glorious attributes of God, his wisdom, his power, and his might. 2. They declare that for these his divine perfections he ought to be blessed and praised, and glorified to all eternity, and they confirm it by their Amen. We see what is the work of heaven, and we ought to begin it now, to get our hearts tuned for it, to be much in it, and long for that world, where our praises, as well as happiness, will be perfect.

12. And

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Here we have a description of the honour and happiness of those that have faithfully served the Lord Jesus Christ, and suffered for him; where observe, 1. A question asked by one of the elders, not for his own information, but for John's instruction; ministers may learn from the people, especially from aged and experienced Christians; the lowest saint in heaven knows more than the greatest apostle in the world; now the question has two parts: (1.) *What are these that are arrayed in white robes?* (2.) *Whence came they?* It seems to be spoke by way of admiration, as Cant. iii. 6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?* Faithful Christians deserve our notice and respect, we should mark the upright. 2. The answer returned by the apostle, in which he tacitly acknowledges his own ignorance, and sues to this elder for information, *Thou knowest*; those that would gain knowledge, must not be ashamed to own their ignorance, nor to desire instruction from any that are able to give it. 3. The account given to the apostle concerning that noble army of martyrs that stood before the throne of God with white robes, and palms of victory in their hands, and of them it is here observed, 1. The low and desolate state they had formerly been in, they had been in great tribulation, persecuted by men, tempted by Satan, sometimes troubled in their own spirits; they had suffered the spoiling of their goods, the imprisonment of their persons, yea, the loss of life itself; the way to heaven lies through many tribulation, but tribulations, how great soever, shall not separate us from the love of God: Tribulation, when gone through well, will make heaven more welcome and more glorious. 2. The means by which they had been prepared for that great honour and happiness they now enjoyed, ver. 14. they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not the blood of the martyrs themselves, but the blood of the Lamb, that can wash away sin, and make the soul pure and clean in the sight of God; other blood stains, this is the only blood that makes the robes of the saints white and clean. 3. The blessedness to which they are now advanced, being thus prepared for it: 1. They are happy in their station, for they are before the throne of God night and day, and he dwells among them, they are in that presence, where there is fulness of joy. 2. They are happy in their employment, for they serve God continually, and that without weakness, drowsiness, or weariness; heaven is a state of service, though not of suffering; it is a state of rest, but not of sloth; it is a praising delightful rest. 3. They are happy in their freedom from all the inconveniences of this present life: (1.) From all want, and sense of want; they hunger and thirst no more; all their wants are supplied, and all the uneasiness caused thereby is removed. (2.) From all sickness and pain, they shall never be scorched by the heat of the sun any more. 4. They are happy in the love and conduct of the Lord Jesus, he shall feed them, he shall lead them to living fountains of waters, he shall put them into the possession of every thing that is pleasant and refreshing to their souls, and therefore they shall hunger and thirst no more. 5. They are happy in being delivered from all sorrow, or occasion of it, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; they have formerly had their sorrows, and shed many tears, both upon the account of sin and affliction; but God himself, with his own gentle and gracious hand, will wipe those tears away, and they shall return no more for ever; and they would not have been without those tears, when God comes to wipe them away; in this he deals with them as a tender father that finds his beloved child in tears, he comforts him, he wipes his eyes, and turns his sorrow into rejoicing; this should moderate the Christian's sorrow in his present state, and support him under all the troubles of it; for they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; and they that now go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

C H A P. VII.

We have already seen what occurred upon opening six of the seals, we now come to the opening of the seventh, which introduced the sounding of the seven trumpets, and a dreadful scene now opens; most expositors agree, the seven seals represent the interval between the apostles time and the reign of Constantine, but the seven trumpets are designed to represent the rise of antichrist, some time after the empire became Christian: In this chapter we have the preface, or prelude, to the sounding of the trumpets, ver. 1—7. 2. The sounding of four of the trumpets, ver. 7, &c.

1. **A**ND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand. 5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices, and thundrings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. 6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

In these verses we have the prelude to the sounding of the trumpets in several parts: 1. The opening of the last seal, this was to introduce a new set of

prophetical iconisms and events, there is a continued chain of providence, one part linked to another, where one ends another begins, and though they may differ in nature and in time, they will make up one wise, well connected, and uniform design in the hand of God. 2. A profound silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, which may be understood either, (1.) Of the silence of peace, that for that time no complaints were sent up to the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth, all was quiet and well in the church, and therefore all silent in heaven, for whenever the church on earth cries through oppression, that cry comes up to heaven, and resounds there; or, (2.) A silence of expectation, great things were upon the wheel of providence, and the church of God, both in heaven and earth, stood silent as became them, to see what God was doing, according to that of Zech. ii. 13. *Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is risen up out of his holy habitation.* And elsewhere. *Be still, and know that I am God.* 3. The trumpets were delivered to the angels, who were to sound them: Still the angels are employed as the wise and willing instruments of divine providence, and they are furnished with all their materials and instructions from God our Saviour: As the angels of the churches are to sound the trumpet of the gospel, the angels of heaven are to sound the trumpet of providence, and every one has his part given him. 4. To prepare for this, another angel must first offer incense, ver. 3. It is very probable, this other angel is the Lord Jesus, the High-priest of the church; who is here described in his sacerdotal office, having a golden censer, and much incense, a fulness of merit in his own glorious person, and this incense he was to offer up with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar of his divine nature. Observe, 1. All the saints are a praying people, none of the children of God are born dumb, a spirit of Grace is always a spirit of adoption and supplication, teaching us to cry, *Abba, Father.* Psalm xxii. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee.* 2. Times of danger should be praying times, and so should times of great expectation; both our fears and our hopes should put us upon prayer; and where the interest of the church of God is deeply concerned, the hearts of the people of God in prayer should be greatly enlarged. 3. The prayer of the saints themselves stand in need of the incense and intercession of Christ to make them acceptable and effectual, and there is provision made by Christ for that purpose, he has his incense, his censer, and his altar; he is all himself to his people. 4. The prayer of the saints come up before God in a cloud of incense, no prayer thus recommended was ever denied audience and acceptance. 5. These prayers that were thus accepted in heaven, produced great changes upon earth in return to them; the same angel that in his censer offered up the prayers of the saints, in the same censer took of the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and this presently caused strong commotions, voices, and thundrings, and lightnings, and an earthquake; these were the answers God gave to the prayers of the saints, and tokens of his anger against the world, and that he would do great things to avenge himself and his people of their enemies; and now all things being thus prepared, the angels discharge their duty.

7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. 8. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood. 9. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. 10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: 11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood: and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. 12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened: and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. 13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven saying, with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels which are yet to sound.

Observe, 1. The first angel sounded the first trumpet, and the events which followed were very dismal, ver. 7. there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, &c. here was a terrible storm, but whether it is to be understood of a storm of heresies, a mixture of monstrous errors falling on the church (for in that age Arianism prevailed) or a storm or tempest of war falling on the civil state, expositors are not agreed: Mr. Mede takes it to be meant of the Gothic inundation that broke in upon the empire in the year 325, the same year that Theodosius died, when the northern nations under Alaricus, king of the Goths, brake in upon the western parts of the empire: However here we observe, 1. That it was a very terrible storm, fire, and hail, and blood; a strange mixture. 2. The limitation of it, it fell on the third part of the trees, and on the third part of the grass, and blasted and burnt it up; that is, say some, upon the third part of the clergy, and the third part of the laity; or, as others that take it to fall upon the civil state, upon the third part of the great men, and upon the third part of the common people; either upon the Roman empire itself, which was a third part of the then known world, or upon a third part of that empire; the most severe calamities have their bounds and limits set them by the great God.

The second angel sounded, and the alarm was followed, as in the first, with terrible events, ver. 8. a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood. By this mountain some understand the leader or leaders of the heretics; others, as Mr. Mede, the city of Rome, which was five times sacked by the Goths and Vandals, within the compass of 437 years, first by Alaricus, in the year 410, with great slaughter and cruelty: In the calamities a third part of the people, called here the sea, or collection of waters, were destroyed; here was still a limitation to the third part, for in the midst of judgment God remembers mercy; this storm fell heavy upon the maritime and merchandising cities and countries of the Roman empire.

3. The third angel sounded; and the alarm had the like effects as before, ver. 10. there fell a great star from heaven, &c. Some take this to be a political star, some eminent governor, and they apply it to Augustulus, who was forced to resign the empire to Odoacer, in the year 490. Others take it

it to be an ecclesiastical star, some eminent person in the church, compared to a *burning lamp*, and they fix it upon Pelagius, who proved about this time a falling star, and greatly corrupted the churches of Christ. Observe. 1. Where this star fell, *upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountain of water*, ver. 10. 2. What effect it had upon them, it turned those springs and streams into *vermwood*, made them very bitter, that men were poisoned by them: either the laws, that are springs of civil liberty and property, and safety, were poisoned by arbitrary power; or the doctrines of the gospel, the springs of spiritual life, refreshment and vigour to the souls of men, were so corrupted and imbibed by a mixture of dangerous errors, that the souls of men found their ruin where they sought for refreshment.

4. *The fourth angel sounded*, and the alarm was followed with further calamities. Observe. 1. The nature of this calamity, it was darkness: it fell therefore upon the great luminaries of the heaven that give light to the world, *the sun, and the moon, and the stars*; either the guides and governors of the church, or of the state, who are placed in higher orbs than the people, and are to dispense light and benign influences to them. 2. The limitation, it was confined to a *third part* of these luminaries; there was some light both of the sun by day, and of the moon and stars by night, but it was only a *third part* of what they had before. Without determining what's matter of controversy in these points among learned men, we rather choose to make these plain and practical remarks: 1. That where the gospel comes to a people, and is but coldly received, and has not its proper effects upon their hearts and lives, it is usually followed with dreadful judgments. 2. God gives warning to men of his judgments before he sends them; he uses to sound an alarm by the written word, by ministers, by men's own consciences, and by the signs of the times; so that if a people be surprised, it is their own fault. 3. That the anger of God against a people makes dreadful work among them, it embitters all their comforts, and makes even life itself bitter and burdensome. 4. That God does not in this world stir up all his wrath, but sets bounds to the most terrible judgments. 5. That corruption of doctrine and worship in the church, are themselves great judgments, and the causes and tokens of other judgments coming on a people. 6. And lastly, before the other three trumpets are sounded, here is solemn warning given to the world, how terrible the calamities would be that should follow them, and how miserable those times and places would be on which they fell, ver. 13. 1. The messenger was *an angel flying in the midst of heaven*, as in haste, and coming on an awful errand. 2. The message was a denunciation of further and greater woe and misery than the world had hitherto endured; here are three woes, to shew how much the calamities coming should exceed those that had been already, or to hint how every one of the three succeeding trumpets should introduce its particular and distinct calamity. Observe. If lesser judgments do not take effect, but the church and the world grow worse under them, they must expect greater; and *God will be known by the judgments that he executes*; and he expects when he comes to punish the world the inhabitants thereof should tremble before him.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have an account of the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets, the appearances that attended them, and the events that were to follow; the fifth Trumpet, ver. 1—13. the sixth, ver. 13, &c.

1. **A**ND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2. And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened, by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, and the scorpions of the earth have power. 4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. 5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. 6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. 7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to hurt men five months. 11. And they had a king over them, *which is the angel of the bottomless pit*, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. 12. One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more hereafter.

Upon the sounding of this trumpet, the things to be observed are, 1. *A star falling down from heaven to the earth*. Some think this star represents some eminent bishop in the Christian church, some angel of the church; for in the same way of speaking by which pastors are called stars, the church is called heaven; but who this is, expositors do not agree: Some understand it of Boniface the third, bishop of Rome, who assumed the title of universal bishop, by the favour of the emperor Phocas, who being an usurper and tyrant in the state, allowed Boniface to be so in the church as the reward of his flattery. 2. *To this fallen star was given the key of the bottomless pit*. Having now ceased to be a minister of Christ, he becomes the antichrist, the minister of the devil; and by the permission of Christ, who had taken from him the keys of the church, he becomes the devil's turnkey, to let loose the powers of hell against the churches of Christ. 3. *Upon the opening*

of the bottomless pit there arose a great smoke, which darkened the sun and the air. The devils are the powers of darkness, hell is the place of darkness. The devil carries on his designs by blinding the eyes of men, by extinguishing light and knowledge, and promoting ignorance and error; he first deceives men, and then destroys them: wretched souls follow him in the dark, or they durst not follow him. 4. Out of this dark smoke there came a swarm of locusts, one of the plagues of Egypt, the devil's emissaries headed by antichrist; all the rout and rabble of antichristian orders, to promote superstition, idolatry, error, and cruelty; and these had, by the just permission of God, power to hurt those that had not the mark of God in their foreheads. 5. The hurt they were to do them was not a bodily but a spiritual hurt; they should not in a military way destroy all by fire and sword; the trees and the grass should be untouched, and those they hurt should not be slain; it should not be a persecution, but a secret poison and infection in their souls, which should rob them of their purity, and afterwards of their peace. Hereby is a poison in the soul, working slowly and secretly, but will be bitterness in the end. 6. They had no power so much as to hurt those that had the seal of God in their foreheads; God's blessing, effectual distinguishing grace will preserve his people from total and final apostasy. 7. The power given to these factors for hell is limited in point of time, five months, a certain season, and but a short season, though how short we cannot tell; gospel seasons have their limits, and times of seduction are limited too. 8. Though it would be short, it would be very sharp, inasmuch that those who were made to feel the malignity of this poison in their consciences, would be weary of their lives, ver. 6. *A wounded spirit who can heal?* 9. These locusts were of a monstrous size and shape, ver. 7, 8, &c. They were equipt for their work like horses prepared to battle. 1. They pretended to great authority, and seemed to be assured of victory. *They had crowns like gold on their heads*; it was not true, but a counterfeit authority. 2. They had the shew of wisdom and sagacity, *the face of men*, though the spirit of devils. 3. They had all the allurements of seeming beauty to ensnare and defile the minds of men, *hair like women*; their way of worship was very gaudy and ornamental. 4. Though they appeared with the tenderness of women, they had *the teeth of lions*, were really cruel creatures. 5. They had the defence and protection of earthly powers, *breast plates of iron*. 6. They made a mighty noise in the world, they flew about from one country to another, and the noise of their motion was like that of an army with chariots and horse. 7. Though at first they soothed and flattered men with a fair appearance, there was a sting in their tails, the end of their abominations contained in that, which, though insidious at first, would at length bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. 8. The king and commander of this brutish squadron is here described, 1. As an angel; to be was by nature an angel, once one of the angels of heaven. 2. *The angel of the bottomless pit*; an angel still, but a fallen angel, fallen into the bottomless pit, very large, and out of which there is no recovery. 3. In these infernal regions he is a sort of prince and governor, and has the powers of darkness under his rule and command. 4. That his true name is Abaddon, Apollyon, a destroyer, for that is his business, his design, and employment, to which he diligently attends, in which he is very successful, and takes a horrid delight; it is about this destroying work that he sends out his emissaries and armies to destroy the souls of men. And now here we have the end of one woe, and where one ends, another begins.

13. And the six angels sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, 14. Saying to the six angels which had the trumpet, *Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates*. 15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. 16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. 17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions: and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke, and brimstone. 18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. 19. For their power is in their mouths, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. 20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold and silver, and brass and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their forceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Here let us consider the preface to this vision, and then the vision itself.

1. The preface to this vision, ver. 13, 14. *A voice was heard from the horns of the golden altar*; where observe, 1. That the power of the church's enemies is restrained till God gives the word to have them turned loose. 2. That when nations are ripe for punishment, those instruments of God's anger that were before restrained are now let loose upon them, ver. 14. 3. The instruments that God makes use of to punish a people, may sometimes lie at a great distance from them, so as that no danger may be apprehended from them. These four messengers of divine judgment lay bound in the river Euphrates, a great way from the European nations. Here the Turkish power had its rise, which seems to be the story of this vision.

2. The vision itself, ver. 15, 16. *And the four angels that had been bound in the great river Euphrates were now loosed*. And here observe, 1. The time of their military operations and executions is limited to an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year. Prophetic characters of time are hardly to be understood by us; but in general the time is fixed to an hour when it shall begin, and when it shall end; and how far the execution shall prevail, even to a third part of the inhabitants of the earth. God will make the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. 2. The army that was to execute this great commission is mustered, and the number found to be of horsemen two hundred thousand thousand; but we are left to guess what the infantry must be: In general it tells us, the armies of the Mahometan empire should be vastly great; and so it is certain they were.

3. Their formidable equipage and appearance, *ver. 17.* As the horses were fierce, like lions, and eager to rush into the battle; so they that sat upon them were clad in bright and costly armour, with all the engines of martial courage, zeal, and resolution. 4. The vast havoc and desolation that they made in the Roman empire, which was now become antichristian, a third part of them were killed; they went as far as their commission suffered them, and they could go no farther. 5. Their artillery by which they made such slaughter, which is described *by fire, smoke, and brimstone*, issuing out of the mouths of their horses, and the stings that were in their tails. It is Mr. Mede's opinion, that this is a prediction of great guns, those instruments of cruelty, which make such destruction; and observes, these were first used by the Turks at the siege of Constantinople, and being new and strange, were very terrible, and did great execution: However, here seems to be an allusion to what is mentioned in the former vision, that as antichrist had his forces of a spiritual nature, like scorpions poisoning the minds of men with error and idolatry: so the Turks, that were raised up to punish the antichristian apostasy, had their scorpions and their stings too, to hurt and kill their bodies, who had been the murderers of so many souls. 6. And lastly, Observe the impitenency of the antichristian generation under these dreadful judgments, *ver. 20.* the rest of the men that were not killed, repented not, they still persisted in those sins for which God was so severely punishing them, which were, 1. Their idolatry; they would not cast away their images, though they could do them no good, *could neither see, nor hear, nor walk.* 2. Their murders, *ver. 21.* which they had committed upon the saints and servants of Christ. Popery is a bloody religion, and seems resolved to continue so. 3. Their forceries; they have their charms, and magic arts, and rites in exorcism and other things. 4. Their fornications; they allow both spiritual and carnal impurity, and promote it in themselves and others. 5. *Their thefts*; they have by unjust means heaped together a vast deal of wealth to the injury and impoverishing of families, cities, princes and nations. These are the flagrant crimes of antichrist and his agents; and though God has revealed his wrath from heaven against them, they are obstinate, hardened, and impenitent, and judiciously so, for they must be destroyed. From this sixth trumpet learn, 1. That God can make one enemy of the church to be a scourge and plague to another. 2. That he who is the Lord of hosts, has vast armies at his command to serve his own purposes. 3. That the most formidable powers have limits set them, which they cannot transgress. 4. That when God's judgments are in the earth, he expects the inhabitants thereof should *repent of sin and learn righteousness.* 5. That impenitence under divine judgments is an iniquity that will be the ruin of sinners, for where God judges he will overcome.

C H A P. X.

This chapter is an introduction to the latter part of the prophecies of this book. Whether what is contained between this and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, in chap. xi. ver. 15. be a distinct prophecy from the other, or only a more general account of some of the principal things included in the other, is disputed by our curious inquiries into these obscure writings. However here we have, 1. A remarkable description of a very glorious angel with an open book in his hand, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. An account of seven thunders which the apostle heard, as echoing to this voice of the angel, and communicated some discoveries which the apostle was not yet allowed to write. 3. The solemn oath taken by him who had the book in his hand, ver. 5, 6, 7. 4. The charge given to the apostle, and observed by him, ver. 8—11.

1. **A**ND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. 2. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, 3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. 5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven. 6. And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: 7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Here we have an account of another vision the apostle was favoured with, between the sounding of the sixth trumpet and that of the seventh. And we observe,

1. The person that was principally concerned in communicating this discovery to John, an angel from heaven, *another mighty angel*; who is so set forth, as would induce one to think it could be no other than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 1. *He was clothed with a cloud*; he veils his glory, which is too great for mortality to behold; and he throws a veil upon his dispensations; *clouds and darkness are round about him.* 2. *A rainbow was upon his head*; he is always mindful of his covenant, and when his conduct is most mysterious, yet it is perfectly just and faithful. 3. *His face was as the sun*, all bright and full of lustre and majesty, *chap. i. 16.* 4. *His feet were as pillars of brass*; all his ways both of grace and providence are pure and steady.

2. His station and posture; *he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth*; to shew the absolute power and dominion he had over the world; *And he held in his hand a little book opened*, probably the same that was before sealed, but was now opened, and gradually fulfilled by him.

3. His awful voice, He cried aloud, *as when a lion roareth*, *ver. 3.* And his awful voice was echoed by *seven thunders*, seven solemn and terrible ways of discovering the mind of God.

4. The prohibition given to the apostle, that he should not publish, but conceal what he had learned from the seven thunders, *ver. 4.* The apostle was for preserving and publishing every thing he saw and heard in these visions, but the time was not yet come.

5. The solemn oath taken by this mighty angel. 1. The manner of his swearing, *he lift up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever*; by himself, as God often has done; or by God as God, to whom he, as Lord, Redeemer, and the Ruler of the world, now appeals. 2. The matter of the oath, that *there shall be time no longer*; either, 1. That there shall be now no longer delay in fulfilling the predictions of this book, than till the last angel shall sound, then every thing should be put into speedy execution, *the mystery of God shall be finished*, *ver. 7.* Or, 2. That when this mystery of God is finished, time itself shall be no more; as is the measure of things that are in a mutable changing state; but all things shall be at length for ever fixed, and so time itself swallowed up in eternity.

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth. 9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Here we have, 1. A strict charge given to the apostle, which was, 1. That he should go and take the little book out of the hands of that mighty angel mentioned before. This charge was given, not by the angel himself that stood upon the earth, but by the same voice from heaven that in the fourth verse had laid an injunction upon him not to write what he had discovered by the seven thunders.

2. To eat the book; this part of the charge was given by the angel himself, hinting to the apostle, that before he should publish what he had discovered, he must more thoroughly digest the predictions, and be in himself suitably affected with them.

2. An account of the taste and relish which this little book would have, when the apostle had taken it in; at first, while in his mouth, sweet. All persons feel a pleasure in looking into future events, and in having them foretold; and all good men love to receive a word from God, of what import forever it be. But, 2. when this book of prophecy was more thoroughly digested by the apostle, the contents would be better; these were things so awful and terrible, such grievous persecutions of the people of God, and such desolation made in the earth, that the foresight and foreknowledge of them would not be pleasant but painful to the mind of the apostle; thus was Ezekiel's prophecy to him, *chap. iii. 3.*

3. The apostle's discharge of the duty he was called to, *ver. 10.* He took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it up, and he found the relish to be as was told him. 1. It becomes the servants of God to digest in their own souls the messages they bring to others in his name, and to be suitably affected therewith themselves. 2. It becomes them to deliver every message with which they were charged, whether it would be pleasing or unpleasing to men. That which is least pleasing, may be most profitable; however, God's messengers must not keep back any part of the counsel of God.

4. The apostle is made to know, that this book of prophecy that he had now taken in, was not given him merely to gratify his own curiosity, or to affect him with pleasure or pain, but to be communicated by him to the world: here his prophetic commission seems to be renewed, and he is ordered to prepare for another embassy, to convey those declarations of the mind and will of God, which are of great importance to all the world, and to the highest and greatest men in the world, and such should be read and recorded in many languages, and so it is; we have them in our language, and are all obliged to attend unto them, and humbly to inquire into the meaning of them, and firmly to believe that every thing shall have its accomplishment in the proper time; and when the prophecies are fulfilled, the sense and truth of them will appear, and the omniscience, power, and faithfulness of the great God will be adored.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have an account, 1. Of the measuring reed given to the apostle to take the dimensions of the temple, ver. 1, 2. 2. Of the two witnesses of God, ver. 3—14. 3. Of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and what followed upon it, ver. 14, &c.

1. **A**ND there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

This prophetic passage about measuring the temple, is a plain reference to what we find in Ezekiel's vision, *Ezek. xl. 3.* but how to understand either the one or the other, is not so easy; it should seem the design of measuring the temple in the former case, was in order to the rebuilding of it, and that with advantage; the design of this measure seems to be either, 1. For the preservation of it in those times of public danger and calamity that are here foretold: Or, 2. For its trial, that it may be seen how far it agrees with the standard, or pattern in the mount: Or, 3. For its reformation, that what is redundant, deficient, or changed, may be regulated according to the true model. Observe,

1. How much was to be measured. 1. *The temple.* The gospel church in general; whether it be so built, so constructed as the gospel rule directs, whether it be too narrow, or too large; the door too wide, or too strait. 2. *The altar.* That which was the place of the most solemn acts of worship, may be put for religious worship in general; whether the church has the true altars; both as to substance and situation: as to the substance, whether they take Christ for their altar, and lay down all their offerings there; and in situation, whether the altar be in the holiest; that is, whether they worship God in the Spirit and in truth. 3. The worshippers too must be measured, whether they make God's glory their end, and his word their rule, in all their acts of worship; and whether they come to God with suitable affections, and whether their conversation be as becomes the gospel.

2. What

2. What was not to be measured, *ver. 2.* and why it should be left out. 1. What was not to be measured; *the court which is without the temple, measured it not.* Some say Herod, in the addition made to the temple, built an outer court, and called it, *the court of the Gentiles.* Some tell us, Adrian built the city and an outer court, and called it, *Ælia,* and gave it to the Gentiles. 2. Why was not the outer court mentioned? This was no part of the temple, according to the model either of Solomon or Zerubbabel, and therefore God would have no regard to it. He would not mark it out for preservation, but as it was designed for the Gentiles, to bring Pagan ceremonies and customs, and to annex them to the gospel churches, so Christ abandoned it to them, to be used as they pleased; and both that and the city were trodden under foot for a certain time; *forty and two months:* Which some would have to be the whole time of the reign of antichrist. They that worship in the outer court, are either such as worship in a false manner, or with hypocritical hearts; and these are rejected of God, and will be found among his enemies. From the whole observe, 1. God will have a temple and an altar in the world, till the end of time. 2. That he has a strict regard to this temple, and observes how every thing is managed in it. 3. Those that worship in the outer court will be rejected; and only those that worship *within the veil* accepted. 4. *The holy city,* the visible church, is very much trampled upon in the world. But, 5. The desolations of the church are for a limited time, and for a short time, and she shall be delivered out of all her troubles.

3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sackcloth. 4. These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophesy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. 7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9. And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11. And after three days and a half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them: and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. 13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

In this time of treading down, God has reserved to him his faithful witnesses that will not fail to attest the truth of his word and worship, and the excellence of his ways. Here observe, 1. The number of these witnesses; and it is but a small number and yet it is sufficient. 1. It is but small; many will own and acknowledge Christ in times of prosperity, that will desert and deny him in times of persecution; one witness, when the cause is upon trial, is worth many at other times. 2. It is a sufficient number; for in the mouth of two witnesses every cause shall be established. Christ sent out his disciples two by two to preach the gospel. Some think these two witnesses are Enoch and Elias, that are to return to the earth for a time. Others, the church of the believing Jews, and that of the Gentiles, it should rather seem they are God's eminent faithful ministers, that shall not only continue to profess the Christian religion, but to preach it in at the worst of times. 2. The times of their prophesying, or bearing their testimony for Christ; *a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* That is (as many think) to the period of the reign of antichrist; and if the beginning of that interval could be ascertained, this number of prophetic days, taking a day for a year, would give us a prospect when the end shall be. 3. Their habit, and posture; they prophesy in sackcloth, as those that are deeply affected with the low and distressed state of the churches and interest of Christ in the world. 4. How they were supported and supplied during the discharge of their great and hard work; they stood before the God of the whole earth, and he gave them power to prophesy. He made them to be like Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two olive-trees and candlestick in the vision of Zechariah, *chap. iv. 3, &c.* God gave them the oil of holy zeal, and courage, and strength, and comfort; made them olive-trees, and their lamps of profession were kept burning by the oil of inward gracious principles, which they received from God: They had not only oil in their lamps, but in their vessels; habits of spiritual life, light and zeal. 5. Their security and defence during the time of their prophesying, *ver. 5.* If any attempted to hurt them, fire proceeded out of their mouths, and devoured them. Some think this alludes to Elias his calling for fire from heaven, to consume the captains and their companies that came to seize him, 2 Kings i. 12. God promised the prophet Jeremiah, *chap. v. 14.* Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people shall be wood, and it shall devour them. By their praying, and preaching, and courage in suffering, they shall gail and wound the very hearts and consciences of many of their persecutors, that shall go away self-condemned, and be even terrors to themselves; like Passhur, at the words of the prophet Jeremiah, *chap. xx. 4.* They shall have that free access to God, and that interest in him, that at their prayers God will inflict plagues and judgments upon their enemies, as he did on Pharaoh, turning their rivers into blood, and restraining the dews of heaven, shutting heaven up, that no rain shall fall for many days, as he did at the prayers of Elias,

1 Kings xvii. 1. God has ordained his arrows for the persecutors, and is often plaguing them while they are persecuting his people; they find it hard work to kick against the pricks. 6. The slaying of the witnesses, to make their testimony more strong; they must seal it with their blood. Here observe, 1. The time when they should be killed; *when they have finished their testimony.* They are immortal, they are invulnerable, till their work be done. Some think it ought to be rendered, *when they were about to finish their testimony;* when they had prophesied in sackcloth the greatest part of the 1260 years, then they should feel the last effect of antichristian malice. 2. The enemy that should overcome and slay them; *the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.* Antichrist, the great instrument of the devil, shall make war against them, not only with the arms of subtil and sophistical learning, but chiefly with open force and violence; and God would permit his enemies to prevail against his witnesses for a time. 3. The barbarous usage of these slain witnesses; the malice of their enemies was not satisfied with their blood and death, but pursued even *their dead bodies.* 1. They would not allow them a quiet grave; their bodies were cast out in the open street, the high street of Babylon; or in the high road leading to the city. This city is spiritually called Sodom, for monstrous wickedness; and Egypt for idolatry and tyranny; and here Christ in his mystical body has suffered more than in any place in the world. 2. Their dead bodies were insulted by the inhabitants of the earth, and their death was a matter of mirth and joy to the antichristian world, *ver. 10.* They were glad to be rid of these witnesses, that by their doctrine and example had teased, terrified and tormented the consciences of their enemies; these spiritual weapons cut wicked men to the heart, and fill them with the greatest rage and malice against the faithful. 7. The resurrection of these witnesses, and the consequences thereof. Where, 1. The time of their rising again, after they had laid dead *three days and a half,* *ver. 11.* a short time in comparison of that in which they had prophesied. Here may be a reference to the resurrection of Christ, who is *the resurrection and the life.* *They dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.* Or to the resurrection of Lazarus on the fourth day, when they thought it impossible. God's witnesses may be slain, but they shall rise again: Not in their persons, till the general resurrection; but in their successors: God will revive his work, when it seems to be dead in the world. 2. The power by which they were raised; *the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.* God put not only life, but courage into them, God can make the dry bones to live; it is the Spirit of life from God that quickens dead souls, and shall quicken the dead bodies of his people, and his dying interest in the world. 3. The effect of this upon their enemies; *great fear fell upon them.* The reviving of God's work and witnesses will strike terror into the souls of his enemies. Where there is guilt, there is fear; and a persecuting spirit, though cruel, is not a courageous, but a cowardly spirit. Herod feared John the Baptist. 1. The ascension of the witnesses into heaven, and the consequences thereof, *ver. 12, 13.* Observe, 1. Their ascension. By heaven we may understand, either some more eminent station in the church, the kingdom of grace in this world, or to an high place in the kingdom of glory above. The former seems to be meaning; *the ascending to heaven in a cloud,* in a figurative, not in a literal sense, and their enemies saw them. It will be no small part of the punishment of persecutors, both in this world, and at the great day, that they shall see the faithful servants of God greatly honoured and advanced. To this honour they did not attempt to ascend, till God called them, and said, *Come up hither.* The Lord's witnesses must wait for their advancement, both in the church, and in heaven, till God calls them; they must not be weary of suffering and service, nor too hastily grasp at the reward; but stay till their Master calls them, and then they may gladly ascend to him. 2. The consequences of their ascension; and that as a mighty shock and convulsion in the antichristian empire, and the fall of a tenth part of the city. Some refer this to the beginning of the reformation from popery; when many princes and states fell off from their subjection to Rome. This great work met with great opposition, all the western world felt a great concussion, and the antichristian interest received a great blow, and lost a great deal of ground and interest. 1. By the sword of war, which was then drawn, and many of those that fought under the banner of antichrist were slain by it. 2. By the sword of the Spirit; *the fear of God fell upon them.* They were convinced of their errors, superstition and idolatry; and by true repentance, and embracing the truth, they gave glory to the God of heaven. Thus when God's work and witnesses revive, the devil's work and witnesses fall before him.

14. The second woe is past, and behold, the third woe cometh quickly. 15. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16. And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward upon thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. 19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

We have here the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet; which is ushered in by the usual warning and demand of attention; *the second woe is past, and behold, the third woe cometh quickly.* Then that of the seventh angel sounded: This had been suspended for some time, till the apostle had been made acquainted with some intervening occurrences of very great moment, and worthy of his notice and observation. But what he before expected, he now heard; the seventh angel sounding: And here observe the effects and consequences of this trumpet thus sounded.

1. Here were loud and joyful acclamations of the saints and angels in heaven. When observe, 1. The manner of their adorations: they rose from their seats, and fell upon their faces, and worshipped God; they did it with reverence and humility. 2. The matter of their adorations. 1. They thankfully recognize the right of our God and Saviour, to rule and reign over all the world, *ver. 15.* The kingdoms of this world are become the king-

dom of our Lord, and of his Christ. They were always so in title, both by creation and purchase. 2. They thankfully observe his actual possession of them, and reign over them, they give him thanks because he had taken to him his great power, asserted his rights, and exerted his power, and so turned title into possession. 3. They rejoice that this his reign shall never end; he shall reign for ever and ever; till all enemies be put under his feet; none shall ever wrest the scepter out of his hand.

2. Here were angry resentments in the world, at these just appearances and actings of the power of God, *ver. 18. The nations were angry*; not only had been so, but were so still. Their hear stood up against God, they met his wrath with their own anger; it was a time when God was taking a just revenge upon the enemies of his people, recompensing tribulation to them that had troubled them. It was a time, in which he was beginning to reward his people's faithful services and sufferings; and their enemies could not bear it, they fretted against God, and so increased their guilt, and hastened their destruction.

3. Another consequence was the opening of the temple of God in heaven. Whereby may be meant, that there is now a more free communion between heaven and earth; prayer and praise more freely and frequently ascending, and graces and blessings plentifully descending: But it rather seems to intend, the church of God on earth, an heavenly temple. And it is an allusion to the various circumstances of things in the time of the first temple, under idolatrous and wicked princes, it was shut up and neglected; but under religious and reforming princes, it was opened and frequented: So during the power of antichrist the temple of God seemed to be shut up, and was so in a great degree; but now it was opened again: And at this opening of it, Observe, 1. What was seen there; *the ark of God's testament*. This was in the holy of holies; in this ark the tables of the law were kept. As before Josiah's time the law of God had been lost, but was then found; so in the reign of antichrist, God's law was laid aside, and made void by their traditions and decrees; the scriptures were locked up from the people, and they must not look into these divine oracles; now they are opened, now they are brought to the views of all. This was an unspeakable and invaluable privilege; and this, *like the ark of the testament*, was a token of the presence of God returned to his people, and his favour towards them in Jesus Christ the propitiation.

2. What was heard and felt there; *Lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail*. The great blessing of the reformation was attended with very awful providences; and by terrible things in righteousness God would answer those prayers that were presented in his holy temple now opened. All the great revolutions of the world are concerted in heaven, and are the answers of the prayers of the saints.

C H A P. XII.

It is generally agreed by the most learned expositors, that the narrative we have in this and the two following chapters, from the sounding of the seventh trumpet to the opening of the vials, is not a prediction of things to come, but rather a recapitulation and representation of things past: which as God would have the apostle to foresee while future, he would have him to review now they were past, that he might have a more perfect idea of them in his mind, and might observe the agreement between the prophecy, and that providence that is always fulfilling the scriptures. In this chapter we have an account of the contest between the church and antichrist; the seal of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. 2. As it was begun in heaven: ver. 1—4. 3. As it was carried on in the wilderness, ver. 5, &c.

1. **A**ND there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; 2. And the being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and, behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head. 4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven; and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5. And she brought forth a man-child which was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. 7. And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: 8. And prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceived the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Here we see that early prophecy eminently fulfilled, in which God said he would put enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. where you will observe,

(1.) The attempts of Satan and his agents to prevent the increase of the church, by devouring her offspring *as soon as it was born*; of this we have a very lively description in the most proper images.

1. We see how the church is represented in this vision, 1. As a woman, the weaker part of the world, but the spouse of Christ, and the mother of the saints. 2. As clothed with the sun, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; having put on Christ, who is the sun of righteousness: She, by

her relation to Christ, is invested with honourable rights and privileges, and shines in his rays. 3. As having the moon under her feet; that is the world; she stands up on it, but lives above it; her heart and hope is not set upon subinary things, but on the things that are in heaven, where her head is. 4. As having on her head a crown of twelve stars, that is, the doctrine of the gospel preached by the twelve apostles, which is a crown of glory to all true believers. 5. As in travail, crying out, and pained to be delivered; she was pregnant, and now in pain to bring forth an holy progeny to Christ; desirous that what was begun in the conviction of sinners might end in their conversion; and when the children were brought to the birth, there might be strength to bring forth, and she might see the travail of her soul.

2. How the grand enemy of the church is represented, 1. As a great red dragon; a dragon for strength and terror; a red dragon, for fierceness and cruelty. 2. As having seven heads, that is, pased on seven hills, as Rome was; and therefore it is probable pagan Rome is here meant. 3. As having ten horns, divided into ten kingdoms, as the Roman empire was by Augustus Cæsar. 4. As having seven crowns upon his head, which is after expounded to be seven kings, chap. xvii. 10. 5. As drawing with his tail a third part of the stars in heaven, and casting them down to the earth; turning the ministers and professors of the Christian religion out of their places and privileges, and making them as weak and useless as he could. 6. As standing before the woman, to devour the child as soon as it should be born; very vigilant to crush the Christian religion in its birth, and entirely to prevent the growth and continuance of it in the world.

2. The unsuccessfulness of these attempts against the church; for, 1. She was safely delivered of a man-child, ver. 5. by which some understand Christ, others Constantine; but others with great propriety a race of true believers, strong and united, resembling Christ, and designed, under him, to rule the nations with a rod of iron; that is, shall judge the world by their doctrine and lives now, and as assessors with Christ at the great day. 2. Care was taken of the child, it was caught up to God, and to his throne; that is, taken into his special, powerful, and immediate protection; the Christian religion has been from its infancy the special care of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ. 3. Care was taken of the mother as well as of the child, ver. 6. She fled into the wilderness, a place prepared, both for her safety and sustenance; the church was in an obscure state dispersed; and this proved her security, through the care of divine Providence; this her obscure and private state was for a limited time, not to continue always.

(3.) The attempts of the dragon do not only prove unsuccessful against the church, but fatal to his own interests; for, upon his endeavour to devour the man-child, he engaged all the powers of heaven against him, ver. 7. There was war in heaven, heaven will dispose the quarrel of the church. Here observe, 1. The seat of this war, in heaven; in the church, which is the kingdom of heaven on earth; and under the care of heaven, and in the same interest. 2. The parties, Michael and his angels, on one side; and the dragon and his angels, on the other: Christ, the great angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and all his instruments: This latter party would be much superior in number and outward strength to the other; but the strength of the church lies in having the Lord Jesus for the captain of their salvation.

3. The success of the battle; the dragon and his angels fought, and prevailed not; there was a great struggle on both sides, but the victory fell to Christ and his church, and the dragon and his angels were not only conquered, but cast out; the pagan idolatry, which was worshipping devils, was extirpated out of the empire in the time of Constantine. 4. The triumphant song that was composed and used on this occasion, ver. 10, 11. where observe,

1. How the conqueror is adored; *Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ*: Now God hath shewed himself to be a mighty God: now Christ hath shewed himself to be a strong and mighty Saviour; his own arm has brought salvation, and now his kingdom will be greatly enlarged and established: The salvation and strength of the church is all to be ascribed to the king and head of the church.

2. How the conquered enemy is defeated; 1. By his malice; he was the accuser of the brethren, and accused them before their God night and day; he appeared before God as an adversary to the church, continually bringing in indictments and accusations against them, whether true or false; thus he accused Job, and thus he accused all those high priests, Zech. iii. 1. Though he hates the presence of God, yet he is willing to appear there to accuse the people of God: Let us therefore take heed that we give him no cause of accusation against us; and that when we have sinned, we presently go in before the Lord, and accuse and condemn our lives, and commit our cause to Christ as our advocate. 2. By his disappointment and defeat he and all his accusations are cast out, the indictments quashed, and the accuser turned out of the court with just indignation.

3. How the victory was gained; the servants of God overcame Satan, 1. By the blood of the Lamb, as the meritorious cause; Christ by dying destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. 2. By the word of their testimony, as the great instrument of war; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; by a resolute, powerful preaching the everlasting gospel, which is mighty, through God, to pull down strong-holds; by their courage and patience in sufferings, they loved not their lives unto the death; when the love of life stood in competition with their loyalty to Christ, they loved not their lives so well, but they could give them up to death, could lay them down in Christ's cause; their love to their own lives was overcome by stronger affections of another nature; and thus their courage and zeal helped to confound their enemies, and to convince many of the spectators, and to confirm the souls of the faithful, and to contribute greatly to this victory.

12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. 13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. 14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place: where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman; that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with

with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We have here an account of this war so happily finished in heaven, or in the church, as it was again renewed and carried on in the wilderness, the place to which the church was fled, and where she had been for some time secured, by the special care of her God and Saviour. Observe,

1. The warning given of that distress and calamity that should fall upon the inhabitants of the world in general, through the wrath and rage of the devil: for though his malice is chiefly bent against the servants of God, yet he is an enemy and hater of mankind as such; and being defeated in his designs against the church he is resolved to give all the disturbance he can to the world in general, ver. 12. *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and the sea*; the rage of Satan grows so much the greater, as he is limited both in place and time; when he was confined to the wilderness, and had but a short time to reign there, he comes with the greater wrath.

2. His second attempt upon the church now in the wilderness; he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child, ver. 13. Observe,

1. The care that God had taken of his church, he had conveyed her, as on eagle's wings, into a place of safety provided for her, where she was to continue for a certain space of time, and couched in prophetic characters, taken from Dan. vii. 35.

2. The continual malice of the dragon against the church, her obscurity could not altogether protect her, the old subtil serpent that at first lurked in paradise, now follows the church into the wilderness, and casts out a flood of water after her to carry her away: this is thought to be meant of a flood of error and heresy, which was breathed by Arius, Nestorius, Pelagius, and many more; by which the church of God was in danger of being overwhelmed and carried away; the church of God is in more danger from heretics than from persecutors; and heresies are as certainly from the devil as open force and violence.

3. The seasonable help provided for the church in this dangerous juncture, ver. 16. *The earth helped the woman, and opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood.* Some think, we are to understand the swarms of Goths and Vandals that invaded the Roman empire, and found work for the Arian rulers, that otherwise would have been as furious persecutors as the pagan had been, and had exercised great cruelties already, but God opened a breach of war, and the flood was in a manner swallowed up thereby, and the church enjoyed some respite: God often sends the sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant; and when men choose new gods, then there is danger of war in the gates; intestine broils and contentions often end in the invasions of a common enemy.

4. The devil, being thus defeated in his designs upon the universal church, now turns his rage against particular persons and places; his malice against the woman pushes him on to make war with the remnant of her seed. Some think hereby are meant the Albigenes, that were first by Dioclesian driven up into barren and mountainous places, and afterwards cruelly murdered by popish rage and power, for several generations; and for no other reason, but because they kept the commandments of God, and held the testimony of Jesus Christ: Their fidelity to God and Christ, both in doctrine, worship, and practice, was that which exposed them to the rage of Satan and his instruments, and will do so still, less or more, to the end of the world, when the last enemy shall be destroyed.

C H A P. XIII.

We have in this chapter a farther discovery and description of the church enemies, not other enemies than are mentioned before, but described after another manner, that the methods of their enmity may more fully appear; they are represented as two beasts, the first you have an account of, ver. 1—11. the second ver. 11. &c. By the first some understand Rome pagan, and by the second Rome papal; but others understand Rome papal to be represented by both these beasts; by the first in its secular power, by the second in its ecclesiastical.

1. **A**ND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3. And I saw one of his heads, as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9. If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10. He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

We have here an account of the rise, figure and progress of the first beast: and observe,

1. From what situation the apostle saw this monster; he seemed to himself to stand upon the sea-shore, though it is probable, he was still in a rapture; but he took himself to be in the island Patmos, but whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell.

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2. From whence this beast came, out of the sea: and yet, by the description of it, it should be more likely to be a land-monster; but the more monstrous every thing about it was, the more proper an emblem it would be to set forth the mystery of iniquity and tyranny.

3. What was the form and shape of this beast; it was for the most part like a leopard, but its feet were like the feet of a bear, and its mouth as the mouth of a lion, it had seven heads, and ten horns, and upon its heads the name of blasphemy; a most horrid, hideous monster! in some parts of this description here seems to be an allusion to Daniel's vision of the four beasts, which represented the four monarchies, Dan. vii. 1, 2, 3, &c. one of those beasts was like a lion, another like a bear, and another like a leopard: this beast was a sort of composition of those three, with the fierceness, strength, and swiftness of them all; the seven heads, and the ten horns, seem to design its several powers; the ten crowns, its tributary princes; the word blasphemy on its forehead, proclaims its direct enmity and opposition to the glory of God, by promoting idolatry.

4. The source and spring of his authority, and that was the dragon, he gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority; he was set up by the devil, and supported by him to do his work, and promote his interest: and he lent him all the assistance he could.

5. A dangerous wound given him, and yet unexpectedly healed, ver. 3. Some think, by this wounded head, we are to understand the abolishing of pagan idolatry; and, by the healing of the wound, the introducing the popish idolatry, the same in substance with the former, only in a new dress, and which as effectually answers the devil's design as that did.

6. The honour and worship paid to this infernal monster, all the world wondered after the beast, they all admired his power, and policy, and success, and they worshipped the dragon that gave power to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, they paid honour and subjection to the devil and his instruments, and thought there was no power able to withstand them; so great was the darkness, degeneracy, and the madness of the world!

7. How he exercised his infernal power and policy, he had a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies: he blasphemed God, the name of God, the tabernacle of God, and all them that dwell in heaven: and he made war with the saints, and overcame them, and gained a sort of universal empire in the world. Observe, 1. His malice was principally levelled at the God of heaven, and his heavenly attendance; at God, in making images of him that is invisible, and in worshipping them; at the tabernacle of God, that is say some, at the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which God dwells as in a tabernacle; this is dishonoured by their doctrine of transubstantiation; that will not suffer his body to be a true body, and will put it into the power of the priest to prepare a body for Christ; and against them that dwell in heaven, the glorified saints, by putting them into the place of the pagan demons, and praying to them; which they are so far from being pleased with, that they truly judge themselves wronged and dishonoured by it: thus the malice of the devil throws itself against heaven, and the blessed inhabitants of heaven; these are above the reach of his power; all he can do is to blaspheme them; but the saints on earth are more exposed to his cruelty, and he sometimes is permitted to triumph over them, and to trample upon them.

8. The limitation of the devil's power and success, and that both as to time and persons. 1. He is limited in point of time, his reign is to continue forty and two months, ver. 5. suitable to the other poetical characters of the reign of antichrist. 2. He is limited as to the persons and people that he shall entirely subject to his will and power: it will be only those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Christ had a chosen remnant redeemed by his blood, recorded in his blood, sealed by his Spirit; and though the devil and antichrist might overcome their bodily strength, and take away their natural life, they could never conquer their souls, nor prevail with them to forsake their Saviour and revolt to his enemies.

9. Here is a demand of attention to what is here discovered of the great sufferings and troubles of the church, and an assurance given that when God has accomplished his work on mount Zion, his refining work, then he will turn his hand against the enemies of his people, and they that have killed with the sword, shall themselves fall by the sword, ver. 10. and they that led the people of God into captivity, shall themselves be made captives: And here now is that which will be proper exercise for the patience and faith of the saints; patience under the prospect of so great sufferings, and faith in the prospect of so glorious a deliverance.

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth and earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13. And he doth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men. 14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; 17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

Those that think the first beast signifies Rome pagan, by this second beast would understand Rome papal, that does promote idolatry and tyranny, but in a more soft and lamb-like manner; those that understand the first beast of the secular power of the papacy, take the second to intend its spiritual and ecclesiastical powers, which act under the disguise of religion and charity to the souls of men. Here observe,

1. The form and shape of this second beast, he had two horns like a lamb; but a mouth that spake like a dragon; all agree this must be some great impostor that

that, under pretence of religion, shall deceive the souls of men; the papists would have it to be Apollonius Tyaneus. but Dr. More has rejected that opinion, and fixes it upon the ecclesiastical powers of the papacy; the pope shews the horns of a Lamb, pretends to be the vicar of Christ upon earth, and so to be vested with his power and authority; but his speech betrays him; for he gives form to false doctrines, and cruel decrees, as shews him to belong to the dragon, and not to the Lamb.

2. The power which he exercises, *all the power of the former beast*, ver. 12. he promotes the same interest, pursues the same design in substance, which is to draw men off from worshipping the true God, to worship those that by nature are no gods, and subject the souls and consciences of men to the will and authority of men, in opposition to the will of God; this design is promoted by popery as well as by paganism, and by the crafty art of popery, as well as by the secular arm, both serving the interests of the devil, though in a different manner.

3. The methods by which this *second beast* carried on his interests and designs, and they are of three sorts; 1. *Lying wonders*, pretended miracles, by which they should be deceived, and prevailed with to worship the former beast in this new image or shape that was now made for him; they would pretend to bring down fire from heaven, as Elias did: and God sometimes permits his enemies, as he did the magicians of Egypt, to do things that seem very wonderful, and by which unwary persons may be deluded; it is well known the papal kingdom has been long supported by pretended miracles. 2. Excommunications, anathemas, severe censures by which they pretend to cut men off from Christ, and cast them into the power of the devil, but do indeed deliver them over to the secular power, that they may be put to death; and thus, notwithstanding their vile hypocrisy, they are justly charged with killing those that they cannot corrupt. 3. By disfranchisement, allowing none to enjoy natural, civil, or municipal rights, that will not worship that papal beast, that is, the image of the pagan beast; it is made a qualification for buying and selling the rights of nature, as well as for places of profit and trust, that they have the mark of the beast in their forehead, and, in their right hand: and that they have the name of the beast and the number of his name; it is probable, *they mark the name, and the number of the beast*, may all signify the same thing, that they may make an open profession of their subjection and obedience to the papacy, which is receiving the mark in their forehead, and that they oblige themselves to use all their interest, power, and endeavours to promote the papal authority, which is receiving the mark in their right hands. We are told that pope Martin V. in his bull addressed to the council of Constance, prohibits Roman catholics to suffer any heretics to dwell in their countries, or to make any bargains, use any trades, or bear any civil offices; which is a very clear interpretation of this prophecy.

4. We have here the number of the beast, in such a manner given, as shews the infinite wisdom of God, and will sufficiently exercise all the wisdom and accuracy of men: the number is the number of a man, computed after the usual manner among men, and it is 666: whether this be the number of the errors and heresies that are contained in popery: or rather as others, the number of years from its rise to its fall, is not certain, much less what that period is, which is described by these prophetic numbers; the most admired dissertation on this intricate subject, is that of Dr. Potter, where the curious may find sufficient entertainment; it seems to me to be one of those fusions which God has reserved in his own power; only this we know, God has written *Mene Tekel upon all his enemies*; he has numbered their days, and they shall be finished, but his own kingdom shall endure for ever.

CHAP. XIV.

After an account of the great trials and sufferings which the servants of God had endured, we have now a more pleasant scene opening, the day begins now; and here we have represented, 1. The Lord Jesus at the head of his faithful followers, ver. 1—6. 2. Three angels sent successively to proclaim the fall of Babylon, and the things antecedent and consequent to so great an event, ver. 6—14. 3. The vision of the harveſt, ver. 14, &c.

1. **A**ND I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins; these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb. 5. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Here we have one of the most pleasant sights that can be viewed in this world, the Lord Jesus Christ at the head of his faithful adherents and attendants. Where observe,

1. How Christ appears, as a Lamb standing upon Mount Sion. Mount Sion is the gospel church; Christ is with his church, and in the midst of her in all her troubles; and therefore she is not consumed: It is his presence that secures her perseverance: he appears as a Lamb, a true Lamb, a Lamb of God; there was a counterfeit lamb rose out of the earth in the last chapter, but was really a dragon; here Christ appears as the true paschal lamb, to shew that his mediatorial government; is the fruit of his sufferings, and the cause of his people's safety and fidelity.

2. How his people appear; very honourably; 1. As to the numbers. there are many; even all that were sealed; not one of them lost in all the tribulations through which they had gone. 2. Their distinguishing badge, they had the name of God written on their foreheads, they made a bold and open profession of their faith in God and Christ, and this being followed by suitable actions, they are known and approved. 3. Their congratulations and songs of praise, which were peculiar to the redeemed, ver. 3. their praises were loud as the thunder, or as the voice of many waters; they were melodious, as of harpers; they were heavenly, before the throne of God; the song was new, suited to the new covenant, and unto that new and gracious dif-

penſation of providence under which they now were, and their song was a secret to others, *strangers intermeddled not with their joy*; others might repeat the words of the song, but they were strangers to the true sense and spirit of it. 4. Their character and description: 1. They are described by their chastity and purity, *they were virgins, they had not defiled themselves either with corporal or spiritual adultery, they had kept themselves clean from the abominations of the antichristian generation*. 2. By their loyalty and steadfast adherence to Christ, *they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; they follow the conduct of his word, Spirit, and providence, leaving it to him to lead them into what duties and difficulties he pleases*. 3. By their former designation to this honour, *these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb*, ver. 4. Here is plain evidence of a special redemption, *they were redeemed from among men*; some of the children of men are, by redeeming mercy, distinguished from others; *these were the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb*, his choice ones, eminent in every grace, and the earnest of many more that should be followers of them, as they were of Christ. 4. By their universal integrity and conscientiousness, *there was no guile found in them, and they were without fault before they throne of God; they were without any prevailing guile, any allowed fault, their hearts were right with God*; and as for their human infirmities, they were freely pardoned in Christ; this is the happy remnant who attend upon the Lord Jesus as their Head and Lord, he is glorified in them, and they in him.

6. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. 7. Saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea; and the fountains of waters. 8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city: because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. 9. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; 11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. 12. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

In this part of the chapter we have three angels or messengers sent from heaven, to give notice of the fall of Babylon, and of those things that were antecedent and consequent to that great event.

1. The first angel was sent on an errand antecedent to it, and that was to preach the everlasting gospel, ver. 6, 7. Observe, 1. The gospel is an everlasting gospel, it is so in its nature, and shall be so in its consequences; *though all flesh be grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever*. 2. It is a work fit for an angel to preach this everlasting gospel; such is the dignity and such is the difficulty of that work! and yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels. 3. That the everlasting gospel is of great concern to all the world, and, as it is the concern of all, it is very much to be desired that it should be made known to all, even to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. 4. That the gospel is the great means whereby men are brought to fear God, and to give glory to him; Natural religion is not sufficient to keep up the fear of God; nor to secure to him glory from men; it is the gospel that revives the fear of God, and retrieves his glory in the world. 5. When idolatry creeps into the church of God, it is by the preaching of the gospel, attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, that men are turned from idols to serve the living God, as the Creator of the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water, ver. 7. to worship any God besides him that created the world is idolatry.

2. The second angel follows the other, and proclaims the actual fall of Babylon; the preaching of the everlasting gospel had shaken the foundations of antichristianism in the world, and hastened its downfall: by Babylon is generally understood Rome, which was before called Babylon, for her pride and idolatry. Observe, 1. What God has fore-ordained and foretold shall be done as certainly as if it were done already. 2. The greatness of the papal Babylon will not be able to prevent her fall, but will make it more dreadful and remarkable. 3. The wickedness of Babylon, in corrupting, debauching, and intoxicating the nations round about her, will make her fall just, and will declare the righteousness of God in her utter ruin, ver. 8 her crimes are recited as the just cause of her destruction.

3. A third angel follows the other two, and gives warning to all of that divine vengeance which would overtake all those that obstinately adhered to the antichristian interest after God had thus proclaimed its downfall, ver. 2, 10. If after this (this threatening denounced against Babylon, and in part already executed) any should persist in their idolatry, professing subjection to the beast, and promoting his cause, they must expect to drink deep of the wine of the wrath of God, they shall be for ever miserable in soul and body, Jesus Christ shall inflict his punishment upon them, and the holy angels shall behold it, and approve of it: idolatry both pagan and papist, is a damning sin in its own nature, and will prove fatal to those that persist in it, after fair warning given by the word of providence: they that refuse to come out of Babylon when thus called, and resolve to partake of her sins, must receive of her plagues; and the guilt and ruin of such incorrigible idolaters, will serve to set forth the excellency of the patience and obedience of the saints: these graces shall be rewarded with salvation and glory; when the treachery and rebellion of others shall be punished with everlasting destruction, then it will be said to the honour of the faithful at ver. 12. *Here is the patience of the saints*; you have before seen their patience exercised, now ye see it rewarded.

13. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,

Lord, from henceforth; yea, faith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. 14. And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16. And he that sat on the cloud, thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. 17. And another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven, he having also a sharp sickle. 18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth: for her grapes are fully ripe. 19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. 20. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Here we have the vision of the harvest and vintage, introduced with a solemn preface. Observe,

1. The preface, *ver. 13.* where note, 1. From whence this prophecy about the harvest came, it came down from heaven, and not from men, and therefore it is of certain truth and great authority. 2. How it was to be preserved and published, by writing; it was to be matter of record, that the people of God might have recourse to it for their support and comfort upon all occasions. 3. What it principally intended, and that is, to shew the blessedness of all the faithful saints and servants of God, both in death and after death; *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth, &c.* where observe, 1. The description of those that are and shall be blessed, such as die in the Lord, either die in the cause of Christ, or rather die in a state of vital union with Christ, that are found in Christ when death comes. 3. The demonstration of their blessedness, they rest from their labours, and their works follow them. 1. They are blessed in their rest, they rest from all sin, temptation, sorrow, and persecution; there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest. 2. They are blessed in their recompence, their works follow them; they do not go before them as their title, or price of purchase, but follow them as their evidence of having lived and died in the Lord, and the memory of them will be pleasant, and the reward glorious, far above the merit of all their services and sufferings. 3. They are happy in the time of their dying, when they have lived to see the cause of God reviving, the peace of the church returning, and the wrath of God falling upon their idolatrous cruel enemies; such times are good times to die in: they have Simeon's desire; *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* And all this is ratified and confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit witnessing with their spirits, and with the written word.

2. We have the vision itself, represented by an harvest and a vintage.

1. By an harvest, *ver. 14, 15.* an emblem that sometimes signifies the cutting down of the wicked, when ripe for ruin, by the judgments of God; and sometimes the gathering in of the righteous, when ripe for heaven, by the mercy of God: This seems rather to represent God's judgments against the wicked; and here observe, (1.) The Lord of the harvest, one so like unto the Son of man, that he was the same, even the Lord Jesus, who is described, 1. By the chariot in which he saw a white cloud; a cloud that had a bright side turned to the church, how dark soever it might be to the wicked. 2. By the ensign of his power, on his head was a golden crown, authority to do all that he did, and whatsoever he would do. 3. By the instrument of his providences, in his hand a sharp sickle. 4. By the solicitations he had from the temple to perform this great work; what he did he was desired to do by his people; and though he was resolved to do it, he would for this thing he sought unto by them, and so it should be in return to their prayers. (2.) Observe the harvest-work, which is, to thrust the sickle into the corn, and reap the field; the sickle is the sword of God's justice, the field is the world, reaping is cutting the inhabitants of the earth down and carrying them off. (3.) The harvest time, and that was when the corn is ripe, when the measure of the sins of men is filled up, and they are ripe for destruction; the most inveterate enemies of Christ and his church are not destroyed, till by their sin they are ripe for ruin, and then he will spare them no longer; he will thrust in his sickle, and the earth shall be reaped.

2. A vintage, *ver. 17.* Some think these two are only different emblems of the same judgment; others, that they refer to distinct events of providence before the end of all things. Observe, 1. To whom this vintage-work was committed, to an angel, another angel that came out from the altar, that is from the holiest of all in heaven. 2. At whose request this vintage-work was undertaken, and it was, as before, the cry of an angel out of the temple, the ministers and churches of God on earth. 3. The work of the vintage, which consists of two parts, (1.) The cutting off, and gathering the clusters of the vine, which are now ripe and ready, fully ripe, *ver. 18.* (2.) Casting these grapes into the wine-press, *ver. 19.* and here we are told, 1. What was the wine-press, it was the wrath of God, the fire of his indignation, some terrible calamity, very probably the sword, shedding the blood of the wicked. 2. Where was the place of the wine-press, without the city, where the army lay that came against Babylon. 3. The quantity of the wine, that is, of the blood that was drawn forth by this judgment; it was for depth up to the horses' bridles, and for breadth and length a thousand and six hundred furlongs, *ver. 20.* That is, say some, 200 Italian miles, which is thought to be the measure of the holy land, and may be meant of the patrimony of the holy see, encompassing the city of Rome; but here we are left to doubtful conjectures; perhaps, this great event has not yet had its accomplishment, but the vision is for an appointed time; and therefore though it may seem to tarry, we are to wait for it: But who shall live when the Lord does this?

CHAP. XV.

Hitherto according to the judgment of very eminent expositors, God had represented to his servant John, 1. The state of the church under the

pagan powers, in the six years opened; and then, 2. The state of the church under the papal powers, in the vision of the six trumpets that began to sound upon the opening of the seventh seal; 3. And then is inserted a more general and brief account of the past, present, and future state of the church, in the little book, &c. He now proceeds, 4. To shew him how antichrist should be destroyed, by what steps that destruction should be accomplished, in the vision of the seven vials. This chapter contains an awful introduction, or preparation for the pouring out of the vials; in which we have, 1. A sight of those angels in heaven, that were to have the execution of this great work, and with what acclamations of joy the heavenly hosts applauded the great design, *ver. 1—5.* 2. A sight of these angels coming out of heaven to receive those vials, which they were to pour out, and the great commotions that this caused in the world, *ver. 5, &c.*

1. **A**ND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels, having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God. 2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire! and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Here we have the preparation matters for the pouring out of the seven vials, which was committed to seven angels; and observe,

How these angels appeared to the apostle in heaven; it was in a wonderful manner; and that upon the account, 1. Of the work they had to do, and that was, to finish the destruction of antichrist: God was now about to pour out his seven last plagues upon that interest, and as the measure of Babylon's sin was filled up, they should now find the full measure of his vindictive wrath. 2. The spectators and witnesses of this their commission, all that had gotten the victory over the beast, &c. these stood on a sea of glass, representing this world, as some think, a brittle thing, that shall be broken to pieces; or, as others, the gospel-covenant, alluding to the brazen sea in the temple, in which the priests were to wash; the faithful servants of God stand upon the foundation of the righteousness of Christ; or, as others, the Red Sea, that stood as it were concealed while the Israelites went through; and the pillar of fire reflecting light upon the waters, they would seem to have fire mingled with them, and this to shew, that the fire of God's wrath against Pharaoh and his horses, should dissolve the congealed waters, and destroy them thereby; to which there seems to be an allusion, by their singing the Song of Moses; in which, 1. They extol the greatness of God's works, and the justice and truth of his ways, both in delivering his people and destroying their enemies; they rejoiced in hope, and the near prospect they had of this, though it was not yet accomplished. 2. They call upon all nations to render unto God that fear, glory, and worship, which was due to such a discovery of his truth and justice, *ver. 4. who shall not fear thee?*

5. And after that, I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Observe, 1. How these angels appeared, coming out of heaven, to execute their commission, *ver. 5.* The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. Here is an allusion to the holiest of all in the tabernacle and temple, where was the mercy-seat, covering the ark of the testimony, where the high-priest made intercession, and God commanded with his people, and heard their prayers. Now by this, as it is here mentioned, we may understand, 1. That in the judgments God was now about to execute upon the antichristian interest, he was fulfilling the prophecies and promises of his word and covenant, which was there always before him, and of which he was ever mindful. 2. That in this work he was answering the prayers of the people, which were offered to him by their great High-priest. 3. That he was herein avenging the quarrel of his own Son, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose offices and authority had been usurped, his name dishonoured, and the great designs of his death opposed by antichrist, and his people to worship him in numerous solemn assemblies without the fear of their enemies.

2. How they were equipped and prepared for their works: where observe, 1. Their array, they were clothed with pure and white linen, and had their breasts girded with golden girdles, *ver. 6.* This was the habit of the high-priests when they went to inquire of God, and came out with an answer from him; this shewed these angels were acting in all things under the divine appointment and direction, and that they were going to prepare a sacrifice to the Lord, called the supper of the great God, *chap. x x. 17.* The angels are the ministers of divine justice, and they do every thing in a pure and holy manner. 1. Their artillery, what it was, and from whence they receive it; their artillery, by which they were to do this great execution, was seven vials filled with the wrath of God; they were armed with the wrath of God against his enemies: the meanest creature, when it comes armed with the anger of God, will be too hard for any man in the world: but much more an angel of God: This wrath of God was not to be poured out all at once, but was divided into seven parts, which should successively fall upon the antichristian party. Now from whence did the angels receive these vials? From one of the four living creatures, one of the ministers of the

the true church, that is, in answer to the prayers of the ministers and people of God, and to avenge their cause, in which the angels are willingly employed.

3. The impressions these things made upon all that stood near the temple; they were all as it were wrapt up in clouds of smoke, which filled the temple, from the glorious and powerful presence of God; so that no man was able to enter into the temple, till the work was finished: The interests of antichrist were so interwoven with the civil interests of the nations, that he could not be destroyed without giving a great shock to all the world; and the people of God would have but little rest and leisure to assemble themselves before him, while this great work was a doing; for the present their sabbaths would be interrupted, ordinances of public worship intermitted, and all thrown into a general confusion; God himself was now preaching to the church and to the world, by terrible things in righteousness; but when this work was done, then the churches would have rest, the temple would be opened, and the solemn assemblies gathered, edified, and multiplied; the greatest deliverances of the church are brought about by awful and astonishing steps of providence.

C H A P. XVI.

In this chapter we have an account of the pouring forth of these vials that were filled with the wrath of God, and they were poured out upon the whole antichristian empire, and on every thing appertaining to it: 1. Upon the earth ver. 2. then 2. Upon the sea, ver. 3. 3. Upon the rivers and fountains of waters, ver. 4. Upon which there the heavenly hosts proclaim and applaud the righteousness of the judgments of God. 4. The fourth vial was poured out on the sun, ver. 8. the fifth on the seat of the beast; the sixth on the river Euphrates; the seventh in the air, upon which the cities of the nations fell, and great Babylon came in remembrance before God.

1. **A**ND I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. 3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea: and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5. And I heard the angels of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: 6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments:

We had in the foregoing chapter the great and solemn preparation that was made for the pouring out of the vials; now we have the performance of that work. Where observe, 1. That though every thing was made ready before, yet nothing was to be put in execution without an immediate positive order from God: and this he gave out of the temple, answering the prayers of his people, and avenging their quarrel.

2. No sooner was the word of command given, but it was immediately obeyed; no delay, no objection made. We find some of the best of men, as Moses and Jeremiah, did not so readily come in and comply with the call of God to their work; but the angels of God not only excel in strength, but in readiness to do the will of God. God says, go your ways, and pour out the vials, and immediately the work is begun. We are taught to pray, that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

And now we enter in upon a series of very terrible dispensations of providence; of which it is difficult to give the certain meaning, or to make the particular application. But in the general it is worth our observation,

1. That here is a reference and allusion to several of the plagues of Egypt, such as the turning their waters into blood, smiting them with boils and sores. Their sins were alike, and so were their punishments.

2. These vials have a plain reference to the seven trumpets, which represented the rise of antichrist, and we learn hence, that the fall of the church's enemies shall bear some resemblance to their rise; and that God can bring them down in such ways as they chose to exalt themselves. And the fall of antichrist, shall be gradual; as Rome was not built in one day, so neither shall it fall in one day, but it falls by degrees; it shall fall so as to rise no more.

3. The fall of the antichristian interest should be universal. Every thing that any ways belonged to them, or could be serviceable to them, the premises, and all their appurtenances, are put into the writ for destruction; their earth, their air, their sea, their rivers, their cities, all consigned over to ruin, all accursed for the sake of the wickedness of that people. Thus the creation groans and suffers through the sins of men. Now we proceed to,

2. The first angel who poured out his vial, ver. 2. and observe, 1. Where it fell, upon the earth, that is, say some, upon the common people; others, upon the body of the Roman clergy, that were the basis of the papacy, and of an earthly spirit, all carrying on earthly designs. 2. What it produced, noisome and grievous sores on all that had the mark of the beast. They had marked themselves by their sin, now God marks them out by his judgments. This sore, some think, signifies some of the first appearances of providence against their state and interest, which gave them great uneasiness, as it discovered their inward dis Temper, and was a token of farther evil; the plague tokens appeared.

2. The second angel poured out his vial; and here we see, 1. Where it fell, upon the sea; that is, say some, upon the jurisdiction and dominion of the papacy; others, upon the whole system of their religion, their false doctrines, corrupt glosses, their superstitious rites, their idolatrous worship, their pardons, indulgences, a great conflux of wicked inventions and institutions, by which they maintain a trade and traffic advantageous to themselves, but injurious to all that deal with them. 2. What it produced; it turned the sea into blood, as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea. God discovered not only the vanity and falsehood of their religion, but the

pernicious and deadly nature of it, that the souls of men were poisoned by that which was pretended to be the sure means of their salvation.

3. The next angel poured out his vial, and we are told, 1. Where that fell, upon the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. That is, say some very learned men, upon their emissaries, and especially the Jesuits, who like streams conveyed the venom and poison of their errors and idolatries from the spring-head through the earth. 2. What effect it had upon them, it turned them into blood; some think it stirred up Christian princes to take a just revenge upon them that had been the great incendiaries of the world, and had occasioned the shedding of the blood of armies, and of martyrs; and the following doxology favours this sense, ver. 5, 6. Wherein the instrument that God makes use of in this work is called the angel of the waters, who extols the righteousness of God in this retaliation, they have shed the blood of the saints, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy; to which another angel answered by full consent, ver. 7.

8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9. And men were scorched with a great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11. And blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

In these verses we see the work going on in the appointed order. The

4th Angel poured out his vial, and that fell upon the sun: that is, say some, upon some eminent prince of Popish communion that should renounce their false religion a little while before its utter downfall; and some expect it will be the German emperor. And now what will be the consequence of this? That sun which before cherished them with warm and benign influences, shall now grow hot against these idolaters, and scorch them. Princes shall use their power and authority to suppress them; which yet would be so far from bringing them to repentance, that it should cause them to curse God and their king, and look upward, throwing out their blasphemous speeches against the God of heaven; they were hardened to their ruin. The

5th Angel poured out his vial, ver. 10. And observe, 1. where that fell, upon the seat of the beast; upon Rome itself, the mystical Babylon, the head of the antichristian empire. 2. What effect it had there; the whole kingdom of the beast was full of darkness and distress; from that very city which was the seat of their policy, the source of all their learning, and all their knowledge, and all their pomp and pleasure, it now becomes a source of darkness and pain, and anguish. Darkness was one of the plagues of Egypt, and it is opposed to lustre and honour, and so forebodes the contempt and scorn to which the antichristian interest should be exposed. Darkness is opposed to wisdom and penetration, and forebodes the confusion and folly which the idolaters should discover at that time. It is opposed to pleasure and joy, and so signifies their anguish and vexation of spirit, when their calamities thus came upon them.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God almighty. 15. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16. And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.

6. The sixth angel poured out his vial, and observe, 1. where it fell, upon the great river Euphrates. Some take it literally, for the place where the Turkish power and empire begun; and they think this a prophecy of the destruction of the Turkish monarchy and idolatry, which they think will be effected about the same time with that of the papacy, as another antichrist; and that thereby a way shall be made for the convenience of the Jews, those princes of the east. Others take it for the river Tiber; for as Rome is mystical Babylon, Tiber is mystical Euphrates. And when Rome is destroyed, her river and merchandise must suffer with her. 2. What did this vial produce? 1. The drying up of the river which furnished the city with wealth, provisions, and all sorts of accommodations. 2. A way is hereby prepared for the kings of the east. The idolatry of the church of Rome had been a great hindrance both to the conversion of the Jews, who have been long cured of their inclination to idols, and of the Gentiles, who are hardened in their idolatry, by seeing that which so much symbolises with it among those called Christians. And therefore it is very probable, the downfall of popery removing these obstructions, will open a way both for the Jews and other eastern nations to come into the church of Christ. And if we suppose that Mahometanism shall fall at the same time, there will be still a more open communication between the western and eastern nations, that may facilitate the conversion of the Jews, and of the fulness of the Gentiles. And when this work of God appears, and is about to be accomplished, no wonder if it occasion another consequence, which is, 3. The last effort of the great dragon; he is resolved to have another push for it, that if possible he may retrieve the ruinous posture of his affairs in the world: He is now rallying his forces, recollecting all his spirits, to make one desperate rally before all be lost. This is occasioned by the pouring out of the sixth vial. And here observe, 1. The instruments he makes use of to engage the powers of the earth in his cause and quarrel, three unclean spirits like frogs come forth, one out of the mouth of the dragon, another out of the mouth of the beast, and a third out of the false prophet. Hell, the secular power of antichrist, and the ecclesiastical power, all combined to send their several instruments, furnished with hellish malice, with worldly policy, and with religious falsehood and deceit; and these should muster up the devil's forces for a decisive battle.

2. The

2. The means these instruments would use to engage the powers of the earth in this war; they should work pretended miracles: the old stratagem of him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2 Thess. ii. 9. 10. Some think, a little before the fall of antichrist, the popish pretence of power to work miracles will be revived, and will very much amuse and deceive the world.

3. The field of battle, a place called Armageddon; that is, say some, the mount of Megiddo, near to which, by a stream issuing from thence, Barak overcame Sisera, and all the kings in alliance with him, Judges v. 19. And in the valley of Megiddo Josiah was slain. The place had been famous for two events of a very different nature, the first very happy for the church of God, the latter very unhappy; but should now be the field of the last battle in which the church shall be engaged, and she shall be victorious. This battle required time to prepare for it, and therefore the farther account of it is suspended till we come to the nineteenth chapter, ver. 19, 20.

4. The warning which God gives of this great and decisive trial, to engage his people to prepare for it, ver. 15. It would be sudden and unexpected, and therefore Christians should be clothed, and armed, and ready for it, that they might not be surprised and ashamed. When God's cause comes to be tried, and his battles to be fought, all his people should be ready to stand up for her interest, and be faithful and valiant in his service.

17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19. And this great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Here we have an account of the seventh and last angel pouring forth his vial, contributing his part towards the accomplishment of the downfall of Babylon, which was the finishing stroke. And here, as before, observe,

1. Where this plague fell, *on the air*, that is, upon the prince of the power of the air, that is, the devil. His powers were restrained, his politics confounded, he was bound in God's chain, the sword of God was upon his eye and upon his arm; for he, as well as the powers of the earth, is subject to the power of almighty God. He had used all possible means to preserve the antichristian interest, and to prevent the fall of Babylon; all the influence that he has upon the minds of men, blinding their judgments, and perverting them, hardening their hearts, raising their enmity to the gospel as high as could be: But now here is a vial poured out upon his kingdom, and he is not able to support his tottering cause and interest any longer.

2. What is produced, 1. A thankful voice from heaven, pronouncing, that now the work was done. The church triumphant in heaven saw it, and rejoiced; the church militant on earth saw it and became triumphant: It is finished. 2. A mighty commotion on earth, an earthquake, so great as never was before, shaking the very center; and this ushered in by the usual concomitant of thunder and lightnings. 3. The fall of Babylon, which was divided into three parts, *called the cities of the nations*, ver. 19. Having had rule over the nations, and taken in the idolatry of the nations, incorporating into her religion something of the Jewish, something of the Pagan, and something of the Christian religion, and so was three cities in one. God now remembered this great and wicked city, though for some time he had seemed to have forgotten her idolatry and cruelty, yet now he gives unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And this downfall extended farther than to the seat of antichrist; it reached from the centre to the circumference; and every island, and every mountain, that seemed by nature and situation the most secured, were carried away in the deluge of this ruin.

3. How the antichristian party were affected with it; though it fell upon them as a dreadful storm, as if the stones of the city tumbled up into the air came down upon their heads, like hail stones of a talent weight each, yet they were so far from repenting, that they blasphemed that God who thus punished them. Here was a dreadful plague of the heart, a spiritual judgment more dreadful and destructive than all the rest. Observe, 1. The greatest calamities that can befall men, will not bring them to repentance without the grace of God working with them. 2. Those who are not made better by the judgments of God, are always the worse for them. 3. That to be hardened in sin and enmity against God by his righteous judgments, is a certain token of utter destruction.

CHAP. XVII.

This chapter is another representative of those things that had been revealed before, concerning the wickedness and ruin of antichrist. This antichrist had been before represented as a beast, and is now described as a great whore. And here, 1. The apostle is invited to see this vile woman, ver. 1, 2. 2. He tells us what an appearance she made, ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. 3. The mystery of it is explained to him, ver. 7—12. And, 4. Her ruin foretold, ver. 13, &c.

1. **A**ND there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither, I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters: 2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having

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seven heads and ten horns. 4. And the woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. 5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration.

Here we have a new vision, not as to the matter of it, for that is contemporary with what came under the three last vials; but as to the manner of description, &c. Observe,

1. The invitation given to the apostle to take a view of what was here to be represented, ver. 1. *Come hither, and I will shew thee the judgment of the great whore, &c.* This is a name of great infamy. A whore is one that is married, and hath been false to her husband's bed, has forsaken the guide of her youth, and broken the covenant of God; she had been a prostitute to the kings of the earth, whom she had intoxicated with the wine of her fornication.

2. The appearance she made, and it was gay and gaudy, like such sort of creatures, ver. 4. *She was arrayed in purple and scarlet colours, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls.* Here were all the allurements of worldly honour and riches, pomp and pride, suited to sensual and worldly minds.

3. Her principal seat and residence upon the beast that had seven heads, and ten horns, &c. That is to say, Rome, the city on seven hills, infamous for idolatry, tyranny, and blasphemy.

4. Her name, which was written on her forehead. It was the custom of impudent harlots to hang out signs, with their names, that all might know what they were. Now in this obsequy, 1. She is named from her place of residence, *Babylon the Great*. But that we might not take it for the old Babylon literally so called, we are told there is a mystery in the name, it is some other great city resembling the old Babylon. 2. She is named from her infamous way and practice; not only a harlot, but a mother of harlots; breeding up harlots, and nursing and training them up to idleness, and all sort of lewdness and wickedness; The parent and nurse of all false religion and filthy conversation.

5. Her diet; she satiated herself with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus: She drank their blood with that greediness, that she intoxicated herself with it; it was so pleasant to her, that she could not tell when she had enough of it. She was satiated, but never satisfied.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8. The beast that thou sawest, was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder (whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space. 11. And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 12. And the ten horns which thou sawest, are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

Here we have the mystery of this vision explained: The apostle wondered at the sight of this woman; the angel undertakes to open this vision to him, it being the key of the former visions. And he tells the apostle what was meant by the beast on which the woman sat; but it is so explained, as still to need further explanation. 1. This beast was, and is not, and yet is: that is, it was a seat of idolatry and persecution; and is not, that is, not in the ancient form, which was pagan: and yet it is, it is truly the seat of idolatry and tyranny, though of another sort and form. It ascends out of the bottomless pit; idolatry and cruelty are the issue and product of hell, and it shall return thither, and go into perdition. 2. This beast has seven heads, which have a double signification. 1. Seven mountains; the seven hills on which Rome stands: And, 2. Seven kings, or sorts of government; Rome was governed by kings, consuls, tribunes, decemviri, dictators, emperors that were Pagan, and emperors that were Christian; five of these were extinct when this prophecy was writ; one was then in being, that is, the Pagan emperor; and the other, that is the Christian emperor, was yet to come, ver. 10. This beast, the papacy, makes an eighth governor, and sets up idolatry again. 3. This beast had ten horns; which are said to be ten kings which as yet have received no kingdoms; as yet, that is, as some, shall not rise up till the Roman empire be broken in pieces; or, as others, shall not rise up till near the end of antichrist's reign; and so shall reign but as it were one hour with her, but shall for that time be very unanimous and very zealous in that interest, and intirely devoted to it, divesting themselves of their prerogatives and revenues, (things so dear to princes) out of an unaccountable fondness for the papacy.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him, are called and chosen, and faithful. 15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh,

and burn her with fire. 17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18. And the woman which thou sawest, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Here we have some account of the downfall of Babylon to be more fully described in the following chapter.

1. Here is a war begun between the beast and his followers, and the Lamb and his followers; the beast and his army, to an eye of sense appear much stronger than the Lamb and his army. One would think an army with a Lamb at the head of them could not stand before the great red dragon. But,

2. Here is a victory gained by the Lamb; the Lamb shall overcome. Christ must reign till all enemies be put under his feet; he will be sure to meet with many enemies, and much opposition, but he will also be sure to gain the victory.

3. Here is the ground and reason of the victory assigned; and that is taken, 1. From the character of the Lamb, he is King of kings and Lord of lords: He has, both by nature and by office, supreme dominion and power over all things; all the powers of earth and hell are subject to his check and controul. 2. From the character of his followers; they are called and chosen and faithful; they are called out by commission to this warfare, they are chosen and fitted for it, and they will be faithful in it: Such an army, under such a commander, will at length carry all the world before them.

4. The victory is justly aggrandised, 1. By the vast multitude that paid obedience and subjection to the beast and to the whore. She sat upon (that is, presided over) many waters: and these waters were so many multitudes of people, and nations, of all languages; yea, she reigned not only over kingdoms, but over the kings, and they were tributaries and vassals, ver. 15. 16. 2. By the powerful influence which God hereby shewed he had over the minds of great men, their hearts were in his hand, and he turned them as he pleased; for, 1. It was of God, and to fulfil his will, that these kings agreed to give their kingdom unto the beast they were judicially blinded and hardened to do so: And, 2. It was of God, that afterwards their hearts were turned against the whore, to hate her, and to make her desolate and naked, and to eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; they shall at length see their folly, and how they have been bewitched and enslaved by the papacy, and out of a just resentment shall not only fall off from Rome, but shall be made the instruments of God's providence in her destruction.

C H A P. XVIII.

We have here, 1. An angel proclaiming the fall of Babylon, ver. 1, 2. 2. Assigning the reasons of her fall, ver. 3. 3. Giving warning to all that belonged to God, to come out of her, ver. 4, 5. and to assist in her destruction, ver. 6, 7, 8. 4. The great lamentation made for her by those that had been large sharers in her sinful pleasures and profits, ver. 9—20. 5. The great joy that there would be among others at the sight of her irrecoverable ruin, ver. 20, &c.

1. **A**ND after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The downfall and destruction of Babylon is an event so fully determined in the counsels of God, and of such consequence to his interests and glory, that the visions and predictions concerning it are repeated.

1. Here is another angel sent from heaven, attended with great power and lustre, ver. 1. He had not only light in himself to discern the truth of his own prediction, but to inform and enlighten the world about that great event; and not only light to discern it but power to accomplish it.

2. This angel publishes the fall of Babylon, as a thing already come to pass; and this he does with a mighty strong voice; that all might hear the cry, and might see how well this angel was pleased to be the messenger of such tidings. Here seems to be an allusion to the prediction of the fall of pagan Babylon, Isa. xxi. 9. where the word is repeated as it is here, *is fallen is fallen*. Some have thought a double fall is hereby intended, first her apostasy, and then her ruin; and they think the words immediately following favour their opinions, ver. 2. *She is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird*. But this is also borrowed from Isa. xxi. 9. and seems to describe not so much her sin of entertaining idols, which are truly called devils, as her punishment, it being a common notion, that unclean spirits, as well as your outrageous and hateful birds, used to haunt a city or house that lay in its ruins.

3. The reason of this ruin is declared; for though God is not obliged to give any account of his matters, yet he is pleased to do so: especially in those dispensations of providence that are most awful and tremendous. The wickedness of Babylon had been very great, for she had not only forsaken the true God herself, and set up idols, but had with great art and industry drawn all sorts of men into the spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury had retained them in her interest, ver. 3.

4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: 5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. 7. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment

and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. 8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Here is fair warning given to all that expect mercy from God, that they should not only come out of her, but be assisting in her destruction, ver. 4, 5. Where observe, 1. That God may have a people even in Babylon, some that belong to the election of grace. 2. That God's people shall be called out of Babylon, and called effectually. 3. Those that are resolved to partake with wicked men in their sins, must receive of their plagues. 4. That when the sins of a people reach up to heaven, the wrath of God will reach down to the earth. 5. That though private revenge is forbidden, yet God will have his people act under him, when called to it, in pulling down his and their inveterate and implacable enemies, ver. 6. 6. That God will proportion the punishment of sinners to the measure of their wickedness, pride, and security, ver. 7. 7. That when destruction comes on a people suddenly, the surprise is a great aggravation of their misery, ver. 8.

9. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lamented for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. 11. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth her merchandise any more: 12. The merchandise of gold and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and marble. 13. And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves; and souls of men. 14. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after, are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly, are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing. 16. And saying, Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls: For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. 17. And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off. 18. And cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city? 19. And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness: for in one hour is she made desolate.

Here we have a doleful lamentation made by Babylon's friends for her fall; and here observe,

1. Who are the mourners, those that have been bewitched by her fornication, and those that have been sharers in her sensual pleasures, and those that had been gainers by her wealth and trade, the kings and the merchants of the earth; the kings of the earth, whom she had flattered into idolatry, by allowing them to be arbitrary and tyrannical over their subjects, while they were obsequious to her; and the merchants, that is, those that trafficked with her for indulgences, pardons, dispensations, preferments, &c. these will mourn, because by this craft they got their wealth.

2. What was the manner of their mourning: 1. They stood afar off, they durst not come nigh her; even Babylon's friends will stand at a distance from her fall; though they had been partakers with her in her sins, and in her sinful pleasures and profits, they were not willing to bear a share in her plagues. 2. They made a grievous outcry, *Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!* 3. They wept, and cast dust upon their heads, ver. 19. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and they will end in dismal sorrow; and all those that rejoice in the success of the church's enemies, will share with them in their downfall; and those that have most indulged themselves in pride and pleasure, are the most able to bear calamities; their sorrows will be excessive, as their pleasure and jollity was before.

3. What was the cause of their mourning, not their sin, but their punishment; they did not lament their fall into idolatry, and luxury, and persecution; but their fall into ruin; the loss of their traffic, and of their wealth and power; the spirit of antichrist is a worldly spirit, and their sorrow is a mere worldly sorrow; they do not lament for the anger of God that was now fallen upon them, but for the loss of their outward comforts; we have a large schedule and inventory of the wealth and merchandise of this city, all which was suddenly lost; ver. 12, 13, and lost irrecoverably, ver. 14. all things which are dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all; the church of God may fall for a time, but she shall rise again; but the fall of Babylon will be an utter overthrow, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah: Godly sorrow is some support under affliction, but mere worldly sorrow adds to the calamity.

20. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. 21. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with

with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22. And the voice of harpers and musicians, and of pipers and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee: and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the found of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee: 23. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth: for by thy forceries were all nations deceived: 24. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

We have here an account of the joy and triumph there was both in heaven and earth at the irrecoverable fall of Babylon; while her own people were bewailing her, the servants of God are called to rejoice over her, ver. 20. where observe, 1. How universal this joy would be, heaven and earth, angels and saints, would join in it; that which is matter of rejoicing to the servants of God in this world, is matter of rejoicing to the angels in heaven. 2. How just and reasonable; and that, 1. Because the fall of Babylon was an act of God's vindictive justice, God was then avenging his people's cause, they had committed their cause to him, to whom vengeance belongs, and now the year of recompence was come for the controversies of Sion; and though they did not take pleasure in the miseries of any, yet they had reason to rejoice in the discoveries of the glorious justice of God. 2. Because it was an irrecoverable ruin, this enemy should never molest them any more, and of this they were assured by a remarkable token, ver. 21. An angel from heaven takes up a stone like a great millstone, and casts it into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon be thrown down with violence, and be found no more at all; the place should be no longer habitable by any man, no work should be done there, no comfort enjoyed, no light seen there, but utter darkness and desolation, as the reward of her great wickedness; first, in deceiving the nations with her forceries, and, secondly, in destroying and murdering those that she could not deceive, ver. 24. such abominable sins deserved so great a ruin.

C H A P. XIX.

In this chapter we have, 1. A farther account of the triumphant song of angels and saints for the fall of Babylon, ver. 1—4. The marriage between Christ and the church proclaimed and perfected, ver. 5—10. 3. Another warlike expedition of the glorious head and husband of the church, with the success of it, ver. 10, &c.

1. **A**ND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: 2. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke arose up for ever and ever. 4. And the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

The fall of Babylon being fixed, finished, and declared to be irrecoverable in the foregoing chapter, this begins with a holy triumph over her, in pursuance to the order given forth, chap. xviii. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets. They now gladly answer the call and here you have, 1. The form of their thanksgiving, in that heavenly and most comprehensive word, Alleluia, praise ye the Lord: with this they begin, with this they go on, and with this they end, ver. 4. their prayers are now turned into praises, the hosannas end in halleluias. 2. The matter of their thanksgiving, they praise him for the truth of his word, and the righteousness of his providential conduct, especially in this great event, the ruin of Babylon, which had been a mother, nurse, and nest of idolatry, lewdness, and cruelty, ver. 2. for which signal example of divine justice, they ascribe salvation, and glory, and honour and power unto our God. 3. The effect of these their praises; when the angels and saints cried, Alleluia, her fire burned more fiercely, and her smoke ascended for ever and ever, ver. 3. The surest way to have our deliverances continued and completed, is to give God the glory of what he has done for us; praising God for what we have, is praying in the most effectual manner for what is yet further to be done for us; the praises of the saints blow up the fire of God's wrath against the common enemy. 4. The blessed harmony between the angels, and the saints in this triumphant song, ver. 4. the churches and their ministers take the melodious sound from the angels, and repeat it, falling down and worshipping God, they cry Amen; Alleluia.

5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. 6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. 10. And I fell at his feet to worship him: And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The triumphant song being ended, an *epithalamium*, or marriage song, begins, ver. 6. where observe,

1. The concert of heavenly music, the chorus was large and loud, *as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings*; God is fearful in praises, there is no discord in heaven, the morning stars sing together, no jarring string, or key untuned, but pure and perfect melody.

2. The occasion of this song, and that is, the reign and dominion of that omnipotent God, who has redeemed his church by his own blood, and is now in a more public manner betrothing her to himself, ver. 7. The marriage of the Lamb is come. Some think this refers to the conversion of the Jews, which they suppose will succeed the fall of Babylon; others to the general resurrection; the former seems more probable. Now,

1. You have here a description of the bride, how she appeared, not in the gay and gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints; in the robes of Christ's righteousness, both imputed for justification, and imparted for sanctification; the white robe of abolution, adoption, and enfranchisement; and the white robe of purity, and universal holiness; she had washed her robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and these her nuptial ornaments she did not purchase by any price of her own, but received them as the gift and grant of her blessed Lord.

2. The marriage-feast, which though not particularly described, as Matt. xxii. 4. yet it is declared to be such as would make them all happy that were called to it, so called as to accept the invitation, a feast made up of the promises of the gospel, the true sittings of God, ver. 9. these promises, opened, applied, sealed, and carried by the Spirit of God in holy, eucharistical ordinances, are the marriage-feast; and the whole collective body of all those that partake of this feast, is the bride, the Lamb's wife; they eat into one body, and drink into one spirit, and are not mere spectators or guests, but coalesce into the espoused party, the mystical body of Christ.

3. The transport of joy which the apostle felt in himself at this vision, he fell down at the feet of the angel to worship him, supposing him to be more than a creature; or having his thoughts at the present overpowered by the vehemency of his affections; where observe, 1. What honour he offered to the angel, he fell at his feet to worship him; this prostration was a part of external worship, it was a posture of proper adoration. 2. How the angel refused it, and that was with some reluctance, See thou do it: have a care what thou doest, thou art doing a wrong thing. 3. He gave a very good reason for his refusal, I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; I am a creature, thine equal in office, though not in nature; I, as an angel and messenger of God, have the testimony of Jesus, a charge to be a witness for him, and to testify concerning him; and thou, as an apostle, having the Spirit of prophecy, hast the same testimony to give in; and therefore we are in this brethren, and fellow-servants. 4. He directs him to the true and only object of religious worship, and that is, God; worship God, and him alone; this fully condemns the practice both of the Jews in worshipping the elements of bread and wine, and of the heathen, and the practice of the Socinians and Arians, who do not believe that Christ is truly and by nature God, and yet pay him religious worship; and this shows what wretched sig-leaves all their evasions and excuses are, which they offer in their own vindication; they stand hereby convicted of idolatry by a messenger from heaven.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war: 12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself: 13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood: and his name is called, The word of God. 14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God. 16. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS. 17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

No sooner was the marriage solemnized between Christ and his church by the conversion of the Jews, but the glorious head and husband of the church is called out to a new expedition; which seems to be the great battle that was to be fought at Armageddon, foretold chap. xvi. 16. and here observe,

1. The description of the great commander; 1. By the seat of his empire, and that is heaven; his throne is there, and his power and authority is heavenly and divine. 2. His equipage; he is again described as sitting on a white horse, to shew the equity of the cause, and certainty of success. 3. His attributes; he is faithful and true to his covenant and promise, he is righteous in all his judicial and military proceedings, he has a penetrating insight into all the strength and stratagems of his enemies, he has a large and extensive dominion, many crowns, for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. 4. His armour; and that is a vesture dipt in blood; either his own blood,

blood, by which he purchased this mediatorial power: or the blood of his enemies, over whom he has always prevailed. 5. *His name; The Word of God; a name that none fully knows but himself; only this we know, that this Word was God manifest in the flesh; but his perfections are incomprehensible by any creature.*

2. The army which he commands, *ver. 14.* a very large one, made up of many armies, angels and saints followed his conduct, and resembled him in their equipage, and in their armour of purity and righteousness; chosen, and called, and faithful.

3. The weapons of his warfare; *a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth,* *ver. 15.* with which *he smites the nations:* either the threatenings of the written word, which now he is going to execute, or rather, his word of command, calling on his followers to take a just revenge on his and their enemies, who are now put into the wine-press of the wrath of God, to be trodden under foot by him.

4. The ensigns of his authority, his coat of arms: *a name written on his vesture and thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords;* asserting his authority and power, and the cause of the quarrel, *ver. 16.*

5. An invitation given to the *foes of heaven,* that they should come and see the battle, and there in the spoil and pillage of the field, *ver. 17, 18.* intimating, that this great decisive engagement should leave the enemies of the church a feast for the birds of prey, and that all the world should have cause to rejoice in the issue of it.

6. The battle joined; the enemy falls on with great fury, headed by the *beast, and the kings of the earth;* the powers of earth and hell gathered to make their utmost effort, *ver. 19.*

7. The victory gained by the great and glorious head of the church; *the beast and the false prophet,* the leaders of the army were taken prisoners, both he that led them by power, and he that led them by policy and falsehood, *these* are taken and *cast into the burning lake,* made incapable of molesting the church of God any more; and their followers, whether officers or common soldiers, are given up to military execution, and made a feast for the *foes of heaven;* though the divine vengeance will chiefly fall upon the *beast, and the false prophet,* yet it will be no excuse to those that fight under their banner, that they only follow their leaders, and obeyed their command: since they fight for them, they must fall and perish with them. *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye rulers of the earth; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,* Psalm ii. 10, 11.

CHAP. XX.

This chapter is thought by some, to be the darkest part of all this prophecy; it is very probable, the things contained in it are not yet accomplished; and therefore it is the wiser way to content ourselves with general observations, than to be positive and particular in our explanations of it. Here we have an account, 1. Of the binding of Satan for a thousand years, ver. 1—3. 2. The reign of the saints with Christ, for the same time, ver. 4—5. 3. Of the loosing of Satan, and the conflict of the church with Gog and Magog, ver. 7—10. 4. Of the day of judgment, ver. 11, &c.

1. **A**ND I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. 2. And he had hold on the dragon that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. 3. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed for a little season.

We have here a prophecy of the binding of Satan for a certain term of time, in which he should have much less power, and the church much more peace than before; the power of Satan was broke in part by the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world, it was farther reduced by the empire's becoming Christian, it was yet further broken by the downfall of the mystical Babylon, but still this serpent had many heads, and when one is wounded, another has life remaining in it; here we have a farther limitation and diminution of his power; where observe, 1. To whom this work of binding Satan is committed, to an angel from heaven; it is very probable, this angel is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ; the description of him will hardly agree with any other; he is one that has power to bind the strong man armed, and to cast him out, and spoil his goods; and therefore must be *stronger than he.* 2. The means he makes use of in this work, he hath a chain, and a key; a great chain to bind Satan, and the key of the prison in which he was to be confined; Christ never wants proper power and instruments to break the power of Satan, for he has the powers of heaven, and the keys of hell. 3. The execution of this work, *ver. 2, 3.* 1. He laid hold on the dragon that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan: Neither the strength of the dragon nor the subtilty of the serpent, were sufficient to rescue him out of the hands of Christ; he caught hold, and kept his hold: And, 2. He cast them into the bottomless pit; cast him down with force, and with a just vengeance, to his own place and prison, from which he had been permitted to break out, and disturb the churches, and deceive the nations; now he is brought back to that prison, and there laid in chains. 3. He is shut up, and a seal set upon him; Christ shuts, and none can open; he shuts by his power, seals by his authority; and his lock and seal even the devils themselves cannot break open. 4. We have the term of this confinement of Satan, *a thousand years;* after which he was to be loosed again for a little season: The church should have a considerable time of peace and prosperity, but all her trials were not yet over.

4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

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7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Here we have an account of the return of the church's troubles, and another mighty conflict, very sharp, but short and decisive. Observe, 1. The restraints laid for a long time on Satan, are at length taken off; while this world lasts, Satan's power in it will not be wholly destroyed; it may be limited and lessened, but he will have something still to do for the disturbance of the people of God. 2. No sooner is Satan let loose, but he falls to his old work, *deceiving the nations,* and so stirring them up to make a war with the saints, and servants of God, which they would never do, if he had not first deceived them; they are deceived both as to the cause they engage in, they believe it to be a good cause, when it is indeed a very bad one; and they are deceived in the issue, they expect to be successful, but are sure to lose the day. 3. His last efforts seem to be the greatest; the power now permitted to him seems to be more unlimited than before; he has now liberty to heat up for his volunteers in all the four quarters of the earth, and he raised a mighty army, the number of which was as the sand of the sea, *ver. 8.* 4. We have the name of the principal commanders in this army under the dragon, Gog and Magog; we need not be too inquisitive what particular powers are meant by these names, since the army was gathered from all parts of the world; these names are found in other parts of scripture; Magog we read of in Gen. x. 2. he was one of the sons of Japheth, and peopled the country called Syria, from which his descendants spread into many other parts; Gog and Magog together we only read in Ezekiel xxxviii. 2. a prophecy from whence this in the Revelation borrows many of its images. 5. We have the march and military disposition of this formidable army, *ver. 9.* They went up on the breadth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, that is, the spiritual Jerusalem, in which the most precious interests of the people of God are lodged, and therefore to them a beloved city, the army of the saints is described as drawn forth out of the city, and lying under the walls of it to defend it; they were encamped about Jerusalem; but the army of the enemy was so much superior to that of the church, that they compassed them and their city about. 6. You have an account of the battle, and the issue of this war; *fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured the enemy.* Thus the ruin of Gog and Magog is foretold, Ezek. xxxviii. 22. *I will rain upon him, and upon his bounds an overflowing rain, and great hail-stones, and fire and brimstone.* God would, in an extraordinary and more immediate manner, fight this last and decisive battle for his people, that the victory might be complete, and the glory redound to himself. 7. The doom and punishment of the grand enemy, the devil; he is now cast into hell, with his two great officers, the beast and the false prophet, tyranny and idolatry, and that not for any term of time, but to be there tormented night and day, for ever and ever.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. 12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire: This is the second death. 15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.

The utter destruction of the devil's kingdom, very properly leads to an account of the day of judgment, which will determine every man's everlasting state; and we may be assured there will be a judgment, when we see the prince of this world is judged, John xvi. 11. this will be a great day, the great day, when all shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. The Lord help us firmly to believe this doctrine of the judgment to come! it is a doctrine that made Felix tremble. Here we have a description of it; where observe, 1. We behold the throne, and tribunal of judgment, great and white, very glorious, and perfectly just and righteous: The throne of iniquity, that establishes wickedness by a law, has no fellowship with this righteous throne and tribunal. 2. The appearance of the judge, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, who then puts on such majesty and terror, that the earth and the heaven fled from his face, and there was no place found them; there is a dissolution of the whole frame of nature, 2 Pet. iii. 10. 3. The persons to be judged, ver. 12. The dead, small and great; both young and old, low and high, poor and rich; none so mean, but they have some talents to account for; and none so great, as to avoid the jurisdiction of this court? Not only those that are found alive at the coming of Christ, but all that have died before; the grave shall surrender the bodies of men, hell shall surrender the souls of the wicked, the sea shall surrender the many that seem to have been lost in it: All these are the king's prisons, and he will cause them to set forth their prisoners. 4. The rule of judgment settled, the books were opened: What books? Why the book of God's omniscience, who is greater than our consciences, and knows all things. There is a book of remembrance with him both for good and bad; and the book of the sinner's conscience, which, though formerly secret, will now be opened; and another book shall be opened, the book of the scriptures, the statute-book of heaven, the rule of life; this book is opened, as containing the law, the touchstone by which the hearts and lives of men are to be tried; this book determines matter of right, the other books give evidence of matters of fact; hence, by the other book, called the book of life, understand the book of God's eternal counsels; but that does not seem to belong to the affair of judgment; in eternal election God does not act judicially, but with absolute sovereign freedom. 5. The cause to be tried, and that is, the works of men, what they have done, and whether it be good or evil; by their works men shall be justified, or condemned; for though God knows their state and their principles, and looks chiefly at these, yet, being to approve himself to angels and men as a righteous God, he will try their principles by their practices, and so will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. 6. The issue of the trial and judgment, and that will be according to the evidence of fact, and rule of judgment; all those that have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, shall then be condemned with their infernal confederates, cast with them into the lake of fire, as not being entitled to eternal life, according to the rules of life laid down in the scripture; but those whose names are written in that book; that is, those who are justified and acquitted by the gospel, shall then be justified and acquitted by the judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for these are all destroyed together. Let it be our great concern to see on what terms we stand with our Bibles, whether they justify us or condemn us now; for the judge of all will proceed by that rule: Christ shall judge the secrets of all men according to the gospel: Happy are they that have so ordered and stated their cause according to the gospel, as to know beforehand that they shall be justified in the great day of the Lord!

C H A P. XXI.

Hitherto the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment, in the conduct of divine providence towards the church in the world; now, at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away; a new world now appears, the former being passed away. Some are willing to understand all that is said in these two last chapters of the state of the church here on earth, in the glory of the latter days; but others, more probably, take it as a representation of the perfect and triumphant state of the church in heaven: Let but the faithful saints and servants of God wait a while, and they shall not only see, but enjoy the perfect holiness and happiness of that world. In this chapter you have, 1. An introduction to the vision of the new Jerusalem, ver. 1—9. 2. The vision itself, ver. 10, &c.

1. **A**ND I saw a new heaven, and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven; prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5. And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. 6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and forcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

We have here a more general account of the happiness of the church of God in the future state, which it seems most safe to understand the heavenly state.

1. A new world now open to our view, ver. 1. *I saw a new heaven and a new earth*, that is, a new universe; for we suppose the world to be made up of heaven and earth: By the new earth we may understand a new state for the body of men, as well as a heaven for our souls: This world is not now newly created, but newly opened, and filled with all those that were the heirs of it: The new heaven, and the new earth, will not then be distinct; the very earth of the saints, their glorified bodies, will now be spiritual and heavenly, and suited to those pure and bright mansions. To make way for the commencement of this new world, the old world, with all its troubles and commotions, passed away.

2. In this new world the apostle saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, not locally, but as to its original; this new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, beautified with all perfection of wisdom and holiness, meet for the full fruition of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

3. The blessed presence of God with his people is here proclaimed and admired, ver. 3. *I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, &c.* Observe, 1. The presence of God with his church is the glory of the church. 2. It is matter of wonder that a holy God should ever dwell with any of the children of men. 3. That the presence of God with his people in heaven will not be interrupted as it is on earth, but he will dwell with them continually. 4. That the covenant, interest, and relation that there is now between God and his people, will be filled up and perfected in heaven. They shall be his people, their souls shall be assimilated to him, filled with all the love, honour, and delight in God, that their relation to him requires: this shall be their perfect holiness and he will be their God; God himself will be their God: his immediate presence with them, his love fully manifested to them, and his glory put upon them, will be their perfect happiness; then he will fully answer the character of the relation on his part, as they shall do on their part.

4. This new and blessed state will be free from all trouble and sorrow; for, 1. All the effects of former trouble shall be done away; they have been often before in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the church; but now all tears shall be wiped away, no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain, any farther than to make their present felicity the greater: God himself, as their tender Father, with his kind hand, shall wipe away the tears of his children; and they would not have been without those tears, when God shall come and wipe them away. 2. All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed; there shall be neither death, nor gain; and therefore no sorrow, nor crying; these are things incident to that state in which they went before, but now all former things, are passed away.

5. The truth and certainty of this blessed state is ratified by the word and promise of God, and ordered to be committed to writing, as matter of perpetual record, ver. 6, 7. The subject matter of this vision is so great and of so great importance to the church and people of God, that they have need of the most full assurances of it; and God therefore from heaven repeats and ratifies the truth thereof: And besides, many ages must pass between the time when this vision was given forth, and the accomplishment of it, and many great trials must intervene; and therefore God would have it committed to writing for perpetual memory, and continual use to his people. Observe, 1. The certainty of the promise, *these words are faithful and true*; and it follows, *It is done*, as sure as if it were done already. We may and ought to take God's promise as present payment; if he has said, he makes all things new; it is done. 2. He gives us his titles of honour as a pledge or surety of the full performances, even those titles of Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. As it was his glory that he gave the rise and beginning to the world, and to his church, it will be his glory to finish the work begun, and not to leave it imperfect: As his power and will was the first cause of all things, his pleasure and glory is the last end, and he will not lose his design: for then he should no longer be the Alpha and Omega: Men may begin designs which they can never bring to perfection, but the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. 3. The desires of his people towards this blessed state, are another evidence of the truth and certainty of it; they thirst after a state of sinless perfection, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God; and God has wrought in them these longing desires, which cannot be satisfied with any thing else, and therefore would be the torment of the soul if they were disappointed; but it would be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and his love to his people, to create in them holy and heavenly desires, and then deny them their proper satisfaction; and therefore they may be assured, when they have overcome their present difficulties, he will give them of the fountain of the water of life freely.

6. The greatness of this future felicity is declared and illustrated, 1. By the freeness of it; it is the free gift of God: he gives of the waters of life freely; this will not make it less, but more grateful to his people. 2. The fulness of it; the people of God then lie at the fountain-head of all blessedness, they inherit all things, ver. 7. enjoying God, they enjoy all things, he is all in all. 3. By the tenure and title by which they enjoy this blessedness; by right of inheritance, as the sons of God; a title of all others the most honourable, as resulting from so near and endeared a relation of God himself, and the most sure and indefeasible, that can no more cease, than the relation from which it results. 4. By the vastly different state of the wicked; their misery helps to illustrate the glory and blessedness of the saints; and the distinguishing goodness of God towards them, ver. 9. where observe, 1. The sins of those that perish, among which are first mentioned their cowardliness and unbelief; the fearful lead the vain in this black list; they durst not encounter the difficulties of religion, and their slavish fear proceeds from their unbelief; but those that were so dastardly as not to dare to take up the cross of Christ, and discharge their duty to him, were yet so desperate as to run into all manner of abominable wickedness, murder, adultery, sorcery, idolatry, and lying. 2. Their punishment; they have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. 1. They could not burn at a stake for Christ, but they must burn in hell for sin. 2. They must die another death after their natural death; and agonies and terrors of the first death will consign them over to the far greater terrors and agonies of eternal death; to die, and to be always dying. 3. This misery will be their proper part and portion, what they have justly deserved, what they have in effect chosen, and what they have prepared themselves for by their sins: Thus the misery of the damned will illustrate the blessedness of those that are saved, and their blessedness will aggravate the others' misery.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, de-

blood, by which he purchased this mediatorial power; or the blood of his enemies, over whom he has always prevailed. 5. *His name; The Word of God; a name that none fully knows but himself; only this we know, that this Word was God manifest in the flesh; but his perfections are incomprehensible by any creature.*

2. The army which he commands, *ver. 14.* a very large one, made up of many armies, angels and saints followed his conduct, and resembled him in their equipage, and in their armour of purity and righteousness; chosen, and called, and faithful.

3. The weapons of his warfare; *a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth, ver. 15.* with which he smites the nations: either the threatenings of the written word, which now he is going to execute, or rather, his word of command, calling on his followers to take a just revenge on his and their enemies, who are now put into the wine-press of the wrath of God, to be trodden under foot by him.

4. The ensigns of his authority, his coat of arms: *a name written on his vesture and thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords;* asserting his authority and power, and the cause of the quarrel, *ver. 16.*

5. An invitation given to the *servants of heaven*, that they should come and see the battle, and share in the spoil and pillage of the field, *ver. 17, 18.* intimating, that this great decisive engagement should leave the enemies of the church a feast for the birds of prey, and that all the world should have cause to rejoice in the issue of it.

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4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

We have here an account of the reign of the saints for the same space of time in which Satan continued bound; and here observe, 1. Who they were that received such honour; those that had suffered for Christ, and all that had faithfully adhered to him, not receiving the mark of the beast, nor worshipping his image; all that had kept themselves clear of pagan and papal idolatry. 2. The honour bestowed upon them; 1. They were raised from the dead, and restored to life; this may be taken either literally, or figuratively; they were in a civil and political sense dead, and had a political resurrection; their liberties and privileges were revived and restored. 2. Thrones, and power of judgment were given to them; they were possessed of great honour, and interest, and authority; I suppose rather of a spiritual, than of a secular nature. 3. They reigned with Christ a thousand years; they that suffer with Christ, shall reign with Christ; they shall reign with him in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom, in a glorious conformity to him in wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, beyond what had been known before in the world; this is called the first resurrection, which none but those that have served Christ, and suffered for him, shall be favoured with: As for the wicked, they shall not be raised up, and restored to their power again, till Satan be let loose; this may be called a resurrection, as the conversion of the Jews is said to be life from the dead. 3. The happiness of these servants of God is declared. 1. They are blessed and holy, *ver. 6.* None can be blessed but they that are holy; and all that are holy shall be blessed: They were holy as a sort of first-fruits to God in this spiritual resurrection, and as such blessed by him. 2. They are secured from the power of the second death. We know something what the first death is, and it is awful; but we know not what this second death is; it must be much more dreadful; it is the death of the soul, eternal separation from God. The Lord grant we may never know what it is by experience; they that have had experience of a spiritual resurrection, are saved from the power of the second death.

7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Here we have an account of the return of the church's troubles, and another mighty conflict, very sharp, but short and decisive. Observe, 1. The restraints laid for a long time on Satan, are at length taken off; while this world lasts, Satan's power in it will not be wholly destroyed; it may be limited and lessened, but he will have something still to do for the disturbance of the people of God. 2. No sooner is Satan let loose, but he falls to his old work, deceiving the nations, and so stirring them up to make a war with the saints, and servants of God, which they would never do, if he had not first deceived them; they are deceived both as to the cause they engage in, they believe it to be a good cause, when it is indeed a very bad one; and they are deceived in the issue, they expect to be successful, but are sure to lose the day. 3. His last efforts seem to be the greatest; the power now permitted to him seems to be more unlimited than before; he has now liberty to heat up for his volunteers in all the four quarters of the earth, and he raised a mighty army, the number of which was as the sand of the sea, *ver. 8.* 4. We have the name of the principal commanders in this army under the dragon, Gog and Magog; we need not be too inquisitive what particular powers are meant by these names, since the army was gathered from all parts of the world; these names are found in other parts of scripture; Magog we read of in Gen. x. 2. he was one of the sons of Japheth, and peopled the country called Syria, from which his descendants spread into many other parts; Gog and Magog together we only read in Ezekiel xxxviii. 2. a prophecy from whence this in the Revelation borrows many of its images. 5. We have the march and military disposition of this formidable army, *ver. 9.* They went up on the breadth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, that is, the spiritual Jerusalem, in which the most precious interests of the people of God are lodged, and therefore to them a beloved city, the army of the saints is described as drawn forth out of the city, and lying under the walls of it to defend it; they were encamped about Jerusalem; but the army of the enemy was so much superior to that of the church, that they compassed them and their city about. 6. You have an account of the battle, and the issue of this war; fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured the enemy. Thus the ruin of Gog and Magog is foretold, Ezek. xxxviii. 22. I will rain upon him, and upon his bounds an overflowing rain, and great hail-stones, and fire and brimstone. God would, in an extraordinary and more immediate manner, fight this last and decisive battle for his people, that the victory might be complete, and the glory redound to himself. 7. The doom and punishment of the grand enemy, the devil; he is now cast into hell, with his two great officers, the beast and the false prophet, tyranny and idolatry, and that not for any term of time, but to be there tormented night and day, for ever and ever.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. 12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. 14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire: This is the second death. 15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.

The utter destruction of the devil's kingdom, very properly leads to an account of the day of judgment, which will determine every man's everlasting state; and we may be assured there will be a judgment, when we see the prince of this world is judged, John xvi. 11. this will be a great day, the great day, when all shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. The Lord help us firmly to believe this doctrine of the judgment to come! it is a doctrine that made Felix tremble. Here we have a description of it; where observe, 1. We behold the throne, and tribunal of judgment, great and white, very glorious, and perfectly just and righteous: The throne of iniquity, that establishes wickedness by a law, has no fellowship with this righteous throne and tribunal. 2. The appearance of the judge, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, who then puts on such majesty and terror, that the earth and the heaven fled from his face, and there was no place found them; there is a dissolution of the whole frame of nature, 2 Pet. iii. 10. 3. The persons to be judged, ver. 12. The dead, small and great; both young and old, low and high, poor and rich; none so mean, but they have some talents to account for; and none so great, as to avoid the jurisdiction of this court? Not only those that are found alive at the coming of Christ, but all that have died before; the grave shall surrender the bodies of men, hell shall surrender the souls of the wicked, the sea shall surrender the many that seem to have been lost in it: All these are the king's prisons, and he will cause them to set forth their prisoners. 4. The rule of judgment settled, the books were opened: What books? Why the book of God's omniscience, who is greater than our consciences, and knows all things. There is a book of remembrance with him both for good and bad; and the book of the sinner's conscience, which, though formerly secret, will now be opened; and another book shall be opened, the book of the scriptures, the statute-book of heaven, the rule of life; this book is opened, as containing the law, the touchstone by which the hearts and lives of men are to be tried; this book determines matter of right, the other books give evidence of matters of fact: Some, by the other book, called the book of life, understand the book of God's eternal counsels; but that does not seem to belong to the affair of judgment; in eternal election God does not act judicially, but with absolute sovereign freedom. 5. The cause to be tried, and that is, the works of men, what they have done, and whether it be good or evil; by their works men shall be justified, or condemned; for though God knows their state and their principles, and looks chiefly at these, yet, being to approve himself to angels and men as a righteous God, he will try their principles by their practices, and so will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. 6. The issue of the trial and judgment, and that will be according to the evidence of fact, and rule of judgment; all those that have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, shall then be condemned with their internal confederates, cast with them into the lake of fire, as not being entitled to eternal life, according to the rules of life laid down in the scripture; but those whose names are written in that book; that is, those who are justified and acquitted by the gospel, shall then be justified and acquitted by the judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for these are all destroyed together. Let it be our great concern to see on what terms we stand with our Bibles, whether they justify us or condemn us now; for the judge of all will proceed by that rule: Christ shall judge the secrets of all men according to the gospel: Happy are they that have so ordered and stated their cause according to the gospel, as to know beforehand that they shall be justified in the great day of the Lord!

C H A P. XXI.

Hilberto the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment, in the conduct of divine providence towards the church in the world; now, at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away; a new world now appears, the former being passed away. Some are willing to understand all that is said in these two last chapters of the state of the church here on earth, in the glory of the latter days; but others, more probably, take it as a representation of the perfect and triumphant state of the church in heaven: Let but the faithful saints and servants of God wait a while, and they shall not only see, but enjoy the perfect holiness and happiness of that world. In this chapter you have, 1. An introduction to the vision of the new Jerusalem, ver. 1—9. 2. The vision itself, ver. 10, &c.

1. **A**ND I saw a new heaven, and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven; prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5. And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. 6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and forcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

We have here a more general account of the happiness of the church of God in the future state, which it seems most safe to understand the heavenly state.

1. A new world now open to our view, ver. 1. *I saw a new heaven and a new earth*, that is, a new universe; for we suppose the world to be made up of heaven and earth: By the new earth we may understand a new state for the body of men, as well as a heaven for our souls: This world is not now newly created, but newly opened, and filled with all those that were the heirs of it: The new heaven, and the new earth, will not then be distinct; the very earth of the saints, their glorified bodies, will now be spiritual and heavenly, and suited to those pure and bright mansions. To make way for the commencement of this new world, the old world, with all its troubles and commotions, passed away.

2. In this new world the apostle saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, not locally, but as to its original; this new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, beautified with all perfection of wisdom and holiness, meet for the full fruition of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

3. The blessed presence of God with his people is here proclaimed and admired, ver. 3. *I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, &c.* Observe, 1. The presence of God with his church is the glory of the church. 2. It is matter of wonder that a holy God should ever dwell with any of the children of men. 3. That the presence of God with his people in heaven will not be interrupted as it is on earth, but he will dwell with them continually. 4. That the covenant, interest, and relation that there is now between God and his people, will be filled up and perfected in heaven. *They shall be his people*, their souls shall be assimilated to him, filled with all the love, honour, and delight in God, that their relation to him requires: this shall be their perfect holiness and he will be their God; God himself will be their God: his immediate presence with them, his love fully manifested to them, and his glory put upon them, will be their perfect happiness; then he will fully answer the character of the relation on his part, as they shall do on their part.

4. This new and blessed state will be free from all trouble and sorrow; for, 1. All the effects of former trouble shall be done away; they have been often before in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the church; but now all tears shall be wiped away, no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain, any farther than to make their present felicity the greater: God himself, as their tender Father, with his kind hand, shall wipe away the tears of his children; and they would not have been without those tears, when God shall come and wipe them away. 2. All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed; there shall be neither death, nor gain; and therefore no sorrow, nor crying; these are things incident to that state in which they went before, but now all former things, are passed away.

5. The truth and certainty of this blessed state is ratified by the word and promise of God, and ordered to be committed to writing, as matter of perpetual record, ver. 6, 7. The subject matter of this vision is so great and of so great importance to the church and people of God, that they have need of the most full assurances of it; and God therefore from heaven repeats and ratifies the truth thereof: And besides, many ages must pass between the time when this vision was given forth, and the accomplishment of it, and many great trials must intervene; and therefore God would have it committed to writing for perpetual memory, and continual use to his people. Observe, 1. The certainty of the promise, *these words are faithful and true*; and it follows, *It is done*, as sure as if it were done already. We may and ought to take God's promise as present payment; if he has said, he makes all things new; it is done. 2. He gives us his titles of honour as a pledge or surety of the full performances, even those titles of Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. As it was his glory that he gave the rise and beginning to the world, and to his church, it will be his glory to finish the work begun, and not to leave it imperfect: As his power and will was the first cause of all things, his pleasure and glory is the last end, and he will not lose his design: for then he should no longer be the Alpha and Omega: Men may begin designs which they can never bring to perfection, but the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. 3. The desires of his people towards this blessed state, are another evidence of the truth and certainty of it; they thirst after a state of endless perfection, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God; and God has wrought in them these longing desires, which cannot be satisfied with any thing else, and therefore would be the torment of the soul if they were disappointed; but it would be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and his love to his people, to create in them holy and heavenly desires and then deny them their proper satisfaction; and therefore they may be assured, when they have overcome their present difficulties, he will give them of the fountain of the water of life freely.

6. The greatness of this future felicity is declared and illustrated, 1. By the freeness of it; it is the free gift of God: he gives of the waters of life freely; this will not make it less, but more grateful to his people. 2. The fulness of it; the people of God then lie at the fountain-head of all blessedness, they inherit all things, ver. 7. enjoying God, they enjoy all things, he is all in all. 3. By the tenure and title by which they enjoy this blessedness; by right of inheritance, as the sons of God; a title of all others the most honourable, as resulting from so near and endeared a relation of God himself, and the most sure and indefeasible, that can no more cease, than the relation from which it results. 4. By the vastly different state of the wicked; their misery helps to illustrate the glory and blessedness of the saints; and the distinguishing goodness of God towards them, ver. 8. where observe, 1. The sins of those that perish, among which are first mentioned their cowardliness and unbelief; the fearful and the vain in this black list; they durst not encounter the difficulties of religion, and their slavish fear proceeds from their unbelief; but those that were so dastardly as not to dare to take up the cross of Christ, and discharge their duty to him, were yet so desperate as to run into all manner of abominable wickedness, murder, adultery, sorcery, idolatry, and lying. 2. Their punishment; they have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. 1. They could not burn at a stake for Christ, but they must burn in hell for sin. 2. They must die another death after their natural death; and agonies and terrors of the first death will consign them over to the far greater terrors and agonies of eternal death; to die, and to be always dying. 3. This misery will be their proper part and portion, what they have justly deserved, what they have in effect chosen, and what they have prepared themselves for by their sins: Thus the misery of the damned will illustrate the blessedness of those that are saved, and their blessedness will aggravate the others' misery.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending

ascending out of heaven from God. 11. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone clear as crystal; 12. And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. 13. On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates, on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. 14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16. And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. 17. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. 18. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper: the second, sapphire: the third, a chalcedony: the fourth, an emerald; 20. The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the streets of the city were pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

We have already considered the introduction to the vision of the new Jerusalem in a more general idea of the heavenly state, we now come to the vision itself; where observe,

1. The person that opened the vision to the apostle, *one of the seven angels, that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues*, ver. 9. God has a variety of work and employment for his holy angels, sometimes they are to sound the trumpet of divine providence, and give fair warning to a careless world; sometimes they are to pour out the vials of God's anger upon impenitent sinners; and sometimes to discover things of an heavenly nature to those that are the heirs of salvation; and they readily execute every commission they receive from God: And when this world shall be at an end, yet the angels shall be employed by the great God in proper pleasant work to all eternity.

2. The place from which the apostle had this glorious view and prospect; he was taken in ecstasy into a high mountain; from such situations men usually have the most distinct views of adjacent cities; they that would have clear views of heaven, must get as near heaven as they can, into the mount of vision, the mount of meditation and faith, from whence, as from the top of Pisgah, they may behold the goodly land of the heavenly Canaan.

3. The subject matter of the vision, *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, ver. 10. that is, the church of God in her glorious, perfect, triumphant state, under the resemblance of Jerusalem, having the glory of God shining in its lustre, as *uxor splendet radiis mariti*: comely through his comeliness put upon her; glorious in her relation to Christ, and in his image, now perfected in her, and his favour shining upon her; and now we have a large description of the church triumphant under the emblem of a city, far exceeding in riches and splendor all the cities of this world; and this new Jerusalem is here represented to us, both in the exterior and interior part of it.

1. The exterior part of the city, *the wall, and the gates; the wall for security, and the gates for entrance.*

1. *The wall for security*; heaven is a safe state, those that are there are inclosed with a wall, that separates them, and secures them from all evils and enemies: Now here, in the account of the wall, we observe, 1. The height of it, which we are told is very high, seventy yards, ver. 17. sufficient both for ornament and security. 2. The matter of it; it was as jasper; a wall all built of the most precious stones, for firmness and lustre, ver. 11. this city has a wall that is impregnable, as well as precious. 3. The form of it was very regular and uniform, it was four square, the length as large as the breadth. In the New Jerusalem all shall be equal in purity and perfection; and there shall be an absolute uniformity in the church triumphant: a thing wanted and wished for on earth, but not to be expected till we come to heaven. 4. The measure of the wall, ver. 15, 16. twelve thousand furlongs each way, each side, which is forty-eight thousand furlongs in the whole compass, or fifteen hundred German miles; here is room sufficient for all the people of God; many mansions in their father's house. 5. The foundation of the wall, for heaven is a city that hath her foundations, ver. 19. the promise and power of God, and the purchase of Christ, are the strong foundations of the church's safety and happiness: the foundations are described by their number, and by their matter; by their number twelve; alluding to the twelve apostles, ver. 14. whose gospel doctrines are the foundations upon which the church is built, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and as to the matter of these foundations, it was various and precious, set forth by twelve sorts of precious stones, denoting the variety and excellency of the doctrines of the gospel, or of the graces of the holy Spirit, or the personal excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The gates for entrance. Heaven is not inaccessible; there is a way opened into the holiest of all; there is a free admission to all those that are sanctified: they shall not find themselves shut out. Now as to those gates, observe, 1. Their number, they are twelve gates, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. All the true Israel of God shall have entrance into the new Jerusalem; as every tribe had into the earthly Jerusalem. 2. Their guard which were placed upon them, twelve angels; to admit and receive the several tribes of the spiritual Israel, and to keep out others. 3. The inscription on the gates, the names of the twelve tribes; to shew they have a right to the tree of life, and to enter through the gates into the city. 4. The situation of the gates. As the city had four equal sides, answering to the four quarters of the world, east, west, north, and south; so in each side

there were three gates, signifying that from all quarters of the earth there shall be some that shall get safe to heaven and be received there, and that there is as free entrance from one part of the world, as from the other; for in Christ there is neither Jew, nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; men of all nations and languages that believe on Christ, have by him access to God in grace here, and in glory hereafter. 5. The materials of these gates, they were all of pearls, and yet with great variety, every gate one pearl; either one single pearl of that vast bigness, or one single sort of pearl. Christ is the pearl of great price, and he is our way to God. There is nothing magnificent enough in this world fully to set forth the glory of heaven. Could we in the glass of a strong imagination contemplate such a city as is here described, even as to the exterior part of it, such a wall, and such gates, how amazing, how glorious would the prospect be! and yet this but a faint and dim representation of what heaven is in itself.

22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. 23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Now we come to take a view of the interior part of the new Jerusalem. You have seen its strong wall, and stately gates, and glorious guards; now we are to be led through the gates into the city itself; and the first thing which we observe there is the streets of the city, which was pure gold, like transparent glass, ver. 21. The saints in heaven tread upon gold. The new Jerusalem has its several streets. There is the most exact order in heaven; every saint has his proper mansion. There is converse in heaven; the saints are then at rest; but it is not a mere passive rest; it is not a state of sleep and inactivity; but a state of delightful motion; the nations that are saved, walk in the light of it; they walk with Christ in white; they have communion not only with God, but with one another; and all their steps are firm and clean, they are pure and clear as gold, and transparent glass.

1. The temple of the new Jerusalem, which was no material temple made with mens hands, as that of Solomon and Zerubbabel, but a temple altogether spiritual and divine, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple thereof. There the saints are above the need of ordinances; which were the means of their preparation for heaven. When the end is attained, the means are no longer useful. Perfect and immediate communion with God will more than supply the grace of gospel institutions.

2. The light of this city. Where there is no light, there can be no lustre, nor pleasure. Heaven is the inheritance of the saints in light. But what is that light? There is no sun nor moon shining there, ver. 23. Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun. What a dismal world would this be, if it were not for the light of the sun! What is there in heaven that supplies the want of it? Why, there is no want of the light of the sun, for the glory of God lightens that city, and the Lamb is the light thereof. God in Christ will be an everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy to the saints in heaven; and if so, there is no need of the sun or moon, no more than we here need to set up candles at noon-day, when the sun shineth in its strength.

4. The inhabitants of this city; they are described here several ways. 1. By their numbers: here are whole nations of saved souls; some out of all nations, and many out of some nations. All those multitudes that were sealed on earth, are saved in heaven. 2. By their dignity; some of the kings and princes of the earth. Great kings; God will have some of all ranks and degrees of men to fill the heavenly mansions; high and low, and when the greatest kings come to heaven, they will see all their former honour and glory swallowed up of this heavenly glory that so much exceeds. 3. Their continual accession and entrance into this city; the gates shall never be shut. There is no night, and therefore no need of shutting up the gates. Some one or other are coming in every hour and moment; and those that are sanctified, always find the gates open: they have an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

5. The accommodations of this city; all the glory and honour of this world shall be brought into it; whatever is excellent and valuable in this world, shall be there enjoyed in a more refined kind, and to a far greater degree. Brighter crowns, a better and more enduring substance, more sweet and satisfying feasts, a more glorious attendance, a truer sense of honour, and far higher gifts of honour, a more glorious temper of mind, and a more glorious form and countenance than ever was known in this world.

6. And lastly, the unmixed purity of all that belong to the new Jerusalem, ver. 17. There the saints will have no impure thing in them. In the article of death they shall be cleansed from every thing that is of a defiling nature. Now they feel a sad mixture of corruption with their graces, which hinder them in the service of God, and interrupt their communion with him, and intercept the light of his countenance; but at their entrance into the holy of holies, they are washed in the laver of Christ's blood, and presented to the Father without spot. 2. There the saints shall have no impure persons admitted amongst them; in the earthly Jerusalem there will be a mixed communion, after all the care that can be taken. Some roots of bitterness will spring up to trouble and defile Christian societies; but in the new Jerusalem there is a society perfectly pure; free, 1. From such as are openly profane: There are none admitted into heaven that work abominations. In the church on earth, sometimes abominable things are done, solemn ordinances profaned, and prostituted to men openly vicious, for worldly ends; but no such abomination can have place in heaven. 2. Free from hypocrites, such as make lies, say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. These will creep into the churches of Christ on earth, and may lie concealed there a long time, perhaps all their days; but they cannot intrude into the new Jerusalem, which is wholly reserved for those that are called, and chosen, and faithful; who are all written, not only in the register of the visible church, but in the Lamb's book of life.

C H A P. XXII.

In this chapter we have, 1. A farther description of the heavenly state of the church, ver. 1—6. 2. A confirmation of this and all the other visions of this book, ver. 6—20. 3. The conclusion, ver. 20, 21.

1. **A**ND he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. 2. In the midst of the street of it, and of either side the river, was there the tree of life, which bear twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. 4. And they shall see his face: and his name shall be in their foreheads. 6. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The heavenly state which was before described as a city, and called the *new Jerusalem*, is here described as a paradise; alluding to the earthly paradise which was lost by the sin of the first Adam; here is another paradise restored by the second Adam. A paradise in a city, or a whole city in a paradise! In the first paradise there were only two persons to behold the beauty and taste the pleasures of it; but in this second paradise whole cities and nations shall find abundant delight and satisfaction. And here observe,

1. The river of paradise; the earthly paradise was well watered; no place can be pleasant or fruitful that is not so. This river is described, 1. By its fountain-head, *the throne of God, and the Lamb*: All our springs, both of grace, comfort, and glory, are in God, and all our streams flow from him, through the mediation of the Lamb. 2. By its quality; *pure and clear as crystal*: All the streams of earthly comfort are muddy, but these are clear, and salutary, and refreshing, giving life, and preserving life to those that drink of it.

2. The tree of life, in this paradise: Such a tree there was in the earthly paradise, Gen. ii. 9. This far excels it. And now as to this tree observe, 1. The situation of it, *in the midst of the street, and of either side the river*; or, as it might have been better rendered, *in the midst between the terrace-walk and the river*. This tree of life is fed by the pure waters of the river that come from the throne of God. The presence and perfections of God furnish out all the glory and blessedness of heaven. 2. The fruitfulness of this tree. 1. It brings forth many sorts of fruit, *twelve sorts*, suited to the refined taste of all the saints. 2. It brings forth fruit at all times, *yieldeth its fruit every month*; this tree is never empty, never barren; there is always fruit upon it. In heaven there is not only a variety of pure and satisfying pleasures, but a continuance of them, and always fresh. 3. The fruit is not only pleasant, but wholesome. The presence of God in heaven, is the health and happiness of the saints, there they find in him a remedy for all their former maladies, and are preserved by him in the most healthful and vigorous state.

3. The perfect freedom of this paradise from every thing that is evil, ver. 3. *There shall be no more curse*; no accursed one, *κατάρα*, no serpent there, as there will in the earthly paradise: Here is the great excellence of this paradise, the devil has nothing to do there, he cannot draw the saints from serving God to be subject to himself, as he did our first parents; nor can he so much as disturb them in the service of God.

4. The supreme felicity of this paradisiacal state. 1. There the saints shall see the face of God; there they shall enjoy the beatific vision. 2. God will own them, as having his seal and name on their foreheads. 3. *They shall reign with him for ever*; their service shall be not only freedom, but honour and dominion. 4. All this shall be with perfect knowledge and joy. They shall be full of wisdom and comfort, continually walking in the light of the Lord; and this not for a time, but for ever and ever.

5. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. 7. Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 8. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, which shewed me these things. 9. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. 10. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. 11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. 12. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15. For without are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the

offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. 17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. 11. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

We have here a solemn ratification of the contents of this book, and particularly of this last vision, though some think it may not only refer to the whole book, but to the whole New Testament, yea to the whole Bible, completing and confirming the canon of scripture. And here, 1. This is confirmed by the Name and nature of that God that gave out these discoveries, *he is the Lord God faithful and true*, and so are all his sayings. 2. By the messengers he chose to reveal these things to the world, the holy angels shewed them to holy men of God; and God would not employ his saints and angels in deceiving the world. 3. They will soon be confirmed by their accomplishment, they are things that must shortly be done; Christ will make haste, *he will come quickly*, and put all things out of doubt; and then they will prove the wise and happy men that have believed and kept his words. 4. By the integrity of that angel that had been the apostle's guide and interpreter in these visions; and that integrity was such as that he not only refused to accept religious adoration from John, but once and again reproved him for it. He who was so tender for the honour of God, and so displeased with what was a wrong to God, would never come in his name to lead the people of God into mere dreams and delusions; and it still is a farther confirmation of the sincerity of this apostle, that he confesses his own sin and folly, into which he had now again relapsed, and he leaves this his failing on perpetual record: and this shews he was a faithful and an impartial writer. 5. By the order given to leave the book of the prophecy open, to be perused by all, that they might labour to understand it, that they might make their objections against it, and compare the prophecy with the events: God here deals freely and openly with all; he does not speak in secret, but calls every one to witness to the declarations here made, ver. 13. 6. By the effect this book thus kept open will have upon men, those that are filthy and unjust will take that occasion from thence to be more so, but it will confirm, strengthen, and farther sanctify those that are upright with God; it will be a favour of life to some, and of death to others, and so will appear to be from God, ver. 12. 7. It will be Christ's rule of judgment at the great day; he will dispense rewards and punishments to men, according as their works agree or disagree with the word of God: and therefore that word itself must be needs faithful and true. 8. It is the word of him who is the author, finisher, and rewarder of the faith and holiness of his people, ver. 13, 14. He is *the first and the last*, and the same from first to last, and so is his word too: and he will by this word give to his people, that conform themselves to it, a right to the tree of life, and an entrance into heaven; and this will be a full confirmation of the truth and authority of his word, since it contains the title and evidence of that confirmed state of holiness and happiness that remains for his people in heaven. 9. It is a book that condemns and excludes from heaven all wicked, unrighteous persons, and particularly *those that love and make lies*, ver. 15. and therefore can never be itself a lie. 10. It is confirmed by the testimony of Jesus, *which is the Spirit of prophecy*. And this Jesus, as God, is *the root of David*; though as man, his offspring; a person in whom all uncreated and created excellencies meet; too great and too good to deceive his churches and the world. He is the fountain of all light, the *bright and the morning star*; and as such has given to his churches this morning light of prophecy, to assure them of the light of that perfect day that is approaching. 11. It is confirmed by an open and general invitation to all, to come and partake of the promises and privileges of the gospel, those streams of the water of life; these are tendered to all that feel in their souls a thirst which nothing in this world can quench. 12. It is confirmed by the joint testimony of the Spirit of God, and that gracious spirit that is in all the true members of the church of God, *the Spirit and the bride* join in testifying the truth and excellency of the gospel. 13. Lastly, it is confirmed by a most solemn sanction, condemning and cursing all that should dare to corrupt or change the word of God, either by adding to it, or taking from it, ver. 18, 19. He that adds to the word of God draws down upon himself *all the plagues written in this book*; and he that takes any thing away from it, cuts himself off from all the promises and privileges of it; this sanction is like a flaming sword to guard the canon or the scripture from profane hands. Such a fence as this God set about the law, Deut. iv. 2. and the whole Old Testament, Mal. iv. 4. and now in the most solemn manner about the whole Bible; assuring us that it is a book of the most sacred nature, divine authority, and of the last importance, and therefore the peculiar care of the great God.

20. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

We are now come to the conclusion of the whole; and that in three things, 1. Christ's farewell to his church: He seems now, after he had been discovering these things to his people on earth, to take leave of them, and return to heaven; but he parts with them in great kindness, and assures them it shall not be long before he comes again to them; *beloved, I come quickly*; as when he ascended into heaven after his resurrection, he parted with a promise of his gracious presence, so here he parts with a promise of a speedy return. If any say, where is the promise of his coming; when so many ages are now past since this was written; let them know he is not slack to his people, but long suffering to his enemies; his coming will be sooner than they are aware, sooner than they are prepared, sooner than they desire; and to his people it will be seasonable; the vision is for an appointed time, and will not tarry, *he will come quickly*; let this word be always sounding in our ears, and let us give all diligence that we may be found of him in peace, *without spot and blameless*. 2. The church's hearty echo to Christ's promise: 1. Declaring her firm belief of it, *amen, so it is*, to it shall be. 2. Expressing her earnest desire of it, *even so, come Lord Jesus; make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or like a young hart on the mountains of spices*. Thus beats the pulse of the church, thus breathes that gracious Spirit.

ascending out of heaven from God. 11. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone clear as crystal; 12. And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. 13. On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates, on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. 14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16. And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. 17. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. 18. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper: the second, sapphire: the third, a chalcedony: the fourth, an emerald; 20. The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the streets of the city were pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

We have already considered the introduction to the vision of the new Jerusalem in a more general idea of the heavenly state, we now come to the vision itself; where observe,

1. The person that opened the vision to the apostle, one of the seven angels, that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, ver. 9. God has a variety of work and employment for his holy angels, sometimes they are to sound the trumpet of divine providence, and give fair warning to a careless world; sometimes they are to pour out the vials of God's anger upon impenitent sinners; and sometimes to discover things of an heavenly nature to those that are the heirs of salvation; and they readily execute every commission they receive from God: And when this world shall be at an end, yet the angels shall be employed by the great God in proper pleasant work to all eternity.

2. The place from which the apostle had this glorious view and prospect; he was taken in ecstasy into a high mountain; from such situations men usually have the most distinct views of adjacent cities; they that would have clear views of heaven, must get as near heaven as they can, into the mount of vision, the mount of meditation and faith, from whence, as from the top of Pisgah, they may behold the goodly land of the heavenly Canaan.

3. The subject matter of the vision, the bride, the Lamb's wife, ver. 10. that is, the church of God in her glorious, perfect, triumphant state, under the resemblance of Jerusalem, having the glory of God shining in its lustre, as *uxor splendet radiis mariti*: comely through his comeliness put upon her; glorious in her relation to Christ, and in his image, now perfected in her, and his favour shining upon her; and now we have a large description of the church triumphant under the emblem of a city, far exceeding in riches and splendour all the cities of this world; and this new Jerusalem is here represented to us, both in the exterior and interior part of it.

1. The exterior part of the city, the wall, and the gates; the wall for security, and the gates for entrance.

1. The wall for security; heaven is a safe state, those that are there are inclosed with a wall, that separates them, and secures them from all evils and enemies: Now here, in the account of the wall, we observe, 1. The height of it, which we are told is very high, seventy yards, ver. 17. sufficient both for ornament and security. 2. The matter of it; it was of jasper; a wall all built of the most precious stones, for firmness and lustre, ver. 11. this city has a wall that is impregnable, as well as precious. 3. The form of it was very regular and uniform, it was four square, the length as large as the breadth. In the New Jerusalem all shall be equal in purity and perfection; and there shall be an absolute uniformity in the church triumphant: a thing wanted and wished for on earth, but not to be expected till we come to heaven. 4. The measure of the wall, ver. 15, 16. twelve thousand furlongs each way, each side, which is forty-eight thousand furlongs in the whole compass, or fifteen hundred German miles; here is room sufficient for all the people of God; many mansions in their father's house. 5. The foundation of the wall, for heaven is a city that hath her foundations, ver. 19. the promise and power of God, and the purchase of Christ, are the strong foundations of the church's safety and happiness: the foundations are described by their number, and by their matter; by their number twelve; alluding to the twelve apostles, ver. 14. whose gospel doctrines are the foundations upon which the church is built, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and as to the matter of these foundations, it was various and precious, set forth by twelve sorts of precious stones, denoting the variety and excellency of the doctrines of the gospel, or of the graces of the holy Spirit, or the personal excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The gates for entrance. Heaven is not inaccessible; there is a way opened into the holiest of all; there is a free admission to all those that are sanctified: they shall not find themselves shut out. Now as to those gates, observe, 1. Their number, then are twelve gates, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. All the true Israel of God shall have entrance into the new Jerusalem, as every tribe had into the earthly Jerusalem. 2. Their guard which were placed upon them, twelve angels; to admit and receive the several tribes of the spiritual Israel, and to keep out others. 3. The inscription on the gates, the names of the twelve tribes; to shew they have a right to the tree of life, and to enter through the gates into the city. 4. The situation of the gates. As the city had four equal sides, answering to the four quarters of the world, east, west, north, and south; so in each side

there were three gates, signifying that from all quarters of the earth there shall be some that shall get safe to heaven and be received there, and that there is as free entrance from one part of the world, as from the other; for in Christ there is neither Jew, nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; men of all nations and languages that believe on Christ, have by him access to God in grace here, and in glory hereafter. 5. The materials of these gates, they were all of pearls, and yet with great variety, every gate one pearl; either one single pearl of that vast bigness, or one single sort of pearl. Christ is the pearl of great price, and he is our way to God. There is nothing magnificent enough in this world fully to set forth the glory of heaven. Could we in the glass of a strong imagination contemplate such a city as is here described, even as to the exterior part of it, such a wall, and such gates, how amazing, how glorious would the prospect be! and yet this but a faint and dim representation of what heaven is in itself.

22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. 23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Now we come to take a view of the interior part of the new Jerusalem. You have seen its strong wall, and stately gates, and glorious guards; now we are to be led through the gates into the city itself; and the first thing which we observe there is the streets of the city, which was pure gold, like transparent glass, ver. 21. The saints in heaven tread upon gold. The new Jerusalem has its several streets. There is the most exact order in heaven; every saint has his proper mansion. There is converse in heaven; the saints are then at rest; but it is not a mere passive rest; it is not a state of sleep and inactivity, but a state of delightful motion; the nations that are saved, walk in the light of it; they walk with Christ in white; they have communion not only with God, but with one another; and all their steps are firm and clean, they are pure and clear as gold, and transparent glass.

1. The temple of the new Jerusalem, which was no material temple made with mens hands, as that of Solomon and Zerubbabel, but a temple altogether spiritual and divine, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple thereof. There the saints are above the need of ordinances; which were the means of their preparation for heaven. When the end is attained, the means are no longer useful. Perfect and immediate communion with God will more than supply the grace of gospel institutions.

2. The light of this city. Where there is no light, there can be no lustre, nor pleasure. Heaven is the inheritance of the saints in light. But what is that light? There is no sun nor moon shining there, ver. 23. Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun. What a dismal world would this be, if it were not for the light of the sun! What is there in heaven that supplies the want of it? Why, there is no want of the light of the sun, for the glory of God lightens that city, and the Lamb is the light thereof. God in Christ will be an everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy to the saints in heaven; and if so, there is no need of the sun or moon, no more than we here need to set up candles at noon-day, when the sun shineth in its strength.

4. The inhabitants of this city; they are described here several ways, 1. By their numbers: here are whole nations of saved souls; some out of all nations, and many out of some nations. All those multitudes that were sealed on earth, are saved in heaven. 2. By their dignity; some of the kings and princes of the earth. Great kings; God will have some of all ranks and degrees of men to fill the heavenly mansions; high and low, and when the greatest kings come to heaven, they will see all their former honour and glory swallowed up of this heavenly glory that so much exceeds. 3. Their continual accession and entrance into this city; the gates shall never be shut. There is no night, and therefore no need of shutting up the gates. Some one or other are coming in every hour and moment; and those that are sanctified, always find the gates open: they have an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

5. The accommodations of this city; all the glory and honour of the nations shall be brought into it; whatever is excellent and valuable in this world, shall be there enjoyed in a more refined kind, and to a far greater degree. Brighter crowns, a better and more enduring substance, more sweet and satisfying feasts, a more glorious attendance, a truer sense of honour, and far higher posts of honour, a more glorious temper of mind, and a more glorious form and countenance than ever was known in this world.

6. And lastly, the unmixed purity of all that belong to the new Jerusalem, ver. 17. There the saints will have no impure thing in them. In the article of death they shall be cleansed from every thing that is of a defiling nature. Now they feel a sad mixture of corruption with their graces, which hinder them in the service of God, and interrupt their communion with him, and intercept the light of his countenance; but at their entrance into the holy of holies, they are washed in the laver of Christ's blood, and presented to the Father without spot. 2. There the saints shall have no impure persons admitted among them; in the earthly Jerusalem there will be a mixed communion, after all the care that can be taken. Some roots of bitterness will spring up to trouble and defile Christian societies; but in the new Jerusalem there is a society perfectly pure; free, 1. From such as are openly profane: There are none admitted into heaven that work abominations. In the church on earth, sometimes abominable things are done, solemn ordinances profaned, and prostituted to men openly vicious, for worldly ends; but no such abomination can have place in heaven. 2. Free from hypocrites, such as make lies, say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. There will creep into the churches of Christ on earth, and may lie concealed there a long time, perhaps all their days; but they cannot intrude into the new Jerusalem, which is wholly reserved for those that are called, and chosen, and faithful; who are all written, not only in the register of the visible church, but in the Lamb's book of life.